

Running the Numbers ⁶⁵

By Seth R. Nadel

The sad statistics are out for another year, listing the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. As a retired officer, I know that each one of these deaths marks a tremendous loss to the family, agency and community of the officer. But I am also a citizen, with an interest in preserving our rights. And so, with the greatest respect for those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their community, we need to examine at the numbers, and see what they really mean.

There are several estimates of the number of state, county and local police officers in this country, from a high of 1,400,000 to a low of 800,000, the number used by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF, website: nleomf.com). For our purposes, we shall use this low number, but add in the estimated 200,000 Federal officers and agents. So, in round numbers, there are about one million law enforcement officers protecting us right now.

The NLEOMF has listed how many officers died in 2008, a heartbreaking total of 140, based on FBI reports. They also provide a breakdown on how the men and women died. In 2008, 41 officers were shot. So, 0.00014 percent of all the officers in the United States died, and 0.000041 percent of those died of gunshot wounds. Yet, for the 11th year in a row, more officers died in traffic-related incidents than from shootings – 71, or 1.7 times as many.

Now, as someone who has friends and co-workers memorialized on the Law Enforcement Officers wall in Washington, D.C., I know these are far more than statistics. They were people. Yet each year, we hear that more gun control is needed in order to save officers lives. And if I believed for one moment that a specific new statute could save one officer, I would be all for it. But no one has ever been able to prove that any additional gun law – owner registration, gun registration, ammunition numbering, and so on – will have any effect.

From my friends still in Law Enforcement, I have seen the latest FBI report on those who have shot police officers. The outlaws are just that, they live *outside* the law, and the 40 or so who were interviewed laughed at the idea that gun laws have any effect! They get their guns on the street, or by theft. None of them – not one – went to a gun show or gun store. Virtually every one of them was already prohibited – by age, drug use or a felony conviction – from possessing a gun, and they knew it! So they ignore the laws – that's why they are outlaws.

So, how can we save more officers? The one thing that could have the greatest effect is more (or more effective) drivers' training for the officers! Now, that sounds like an outrageous statement, but look again at the numbers. Not every officer who died in a vehicle accident could have been saved by better control of his/her car – not every fatal accident was the officers' fault. But with more officers dieing in and around their vehicles, THAT is the place to start.

Why not more and better firearms training, also? I was a Law Enforcement firearms trainer for 25 years, and I would really love to see expanded firearms training for every officer. But as with the vehicle accidents, not every officer would be saved from every incident by that training. We

must seek the greatest return by reducing that which is killing the most officers first. Only after every fatal Law Enforcement vehicle accident is clearly the fault of the other driver can we even consider what else could be done.

The next time you hear or read of a proposed restriction of our rights, in order to "save police officers' lives," fight back.

There is no logical reason to restrict the rights of millions, when the outlaws themselves say the laws don't matter! Remember, although 41 officers were killed by gunfire in 2008 (at least one by other officers), 71 were killed in traffic accidents! Even at the emotional level that most liberals work at, you can show them that they can save more officers by funding driver training than more-repressive gun laws. Write letters to your local newspaper and to your elected representatives. Speak out for your rights – ALL of your rights. If we do not use them, we most certainly will lose them!

The greatest respect and tribute I can pay to my fellow officers on "the wall" is to insure that their (and my) oath of office was not taken in vain. I would like to keep the wall bare, but not at the cost of our Constitution. I want truth, logic and the Rule of Law to prevail in our Republic. The facts are here, we need to make sure that those who vote on these laws know them, and know how we, their bosses, feel. Then I will have fulfilled my oath "To protect and defend the Constitution of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic."

The mission of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund is to generate increased public support for the law enforcement profession by permanently recording and appropriately commemorating the service and sacrifice of law enforcement officers; and to provide information that will help promote law enforcement safety. For more information, e-mail them at info@nleomf.com.

