

As two men shot by officers Friday are identified, 2018 is on track to be the state's deadliest recent year for police shootings

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FULL TEXT

With two people shot and killed by Utah officers this weekend —including a popular Glendale hip hop artist —2018 is on track to be the state's deadliest year for police shootings in recent memory.

Since January, police have shot at 24 people, killing 14. Only in 2014 and 2007 did police kill that many people, according to Salt Lake Tribune records dating back 15 years.

On Friday, police fired on men in Ogden and in Salt Lake City, killing both of them. They are the ninth and tenth people shot in the past month by police in Utah.

Cody Belgard —better known as the musician See Smoke, according to a number of online memorials —was shot by police at 8 p.m. Friday near 800 N. Sir Patrick Drive, said Sgt. Brandon Shearer. Friends shared videos of his music, including the song “Creep Wit Me,” an homage to the neighborhoods and cities of the Salt Lake Valley. Shearer said Friday night that he didn't know why police were in the area before they shot Belgard, 30. Salt Lake City police released Belgard's name on Saturday and said there would be no further updates over the weekend. Under an order by Mayor Jackie Biskupski, body camera footage will be released in 10 business days, if it exists. West Valley City Police are investigating Belgard's shooting, under the valley-wide protocol that mandates an outside agency investigate police shootings.

The other shooting was in Ogden, where police shot 33-year-old Christopher William Parrish.

Ogden Police Chief Randy Watt said in a Saturday news conference that two customers approached an on-duty police officer in the Walmart at 1959 Wall Ave. at about 6:45 p.m. Friday, reporting that a man was acting “manic and threatening” and saying he wanted to fight people.

The officer spotted Parrish driving away, followed him and stopped him. He wouldn't give the officer much information, Watt said, and when the officer asked him to get out of his car, he instead drove away “rapidly.” Parrish crashed in the road's shoulder, then ran away across the road and into a yard, Watt said.

Parrish picked up a “softball-sized” rock and charged two officers who had chased him, Watt said, “rapidly and violently” attacking them. The officers tried their Tasers, but when those didn't subdue Parrish, they fired their guns, he said. Parrish died at the scene.

Watt said he was still reviewing the evidence and couldn't say whether Parrish touched the officers. Police are waiting for the results of toxicology tests on Parrish, he added.

Parrish had no known connections to the Ogden area aside from the car he was driving, which had been loaned to him by a city resident, Watt said. Police were questioning that person Saturday.

Parrish had been convicted of crimes in Arizona and Oregon, including burglary and aggravated assault. His last address was in Arizona, where there was a warrant for his arrest for parole violations, but he was listed as a missing person out of Montana. Based on Parrish's tattoos, Watt said, police believe he was connected to two white supremacist prison gangs.

The officers who shot Parrish are on administrative leave while Weber County District Attorney investigates the shooting.

The frequency of shootings this year is unusually high in Utah, where police fatally shot five people in 2017 and eight in 2016.

No charges have been filed in any of Utah's 24 shootings by police this year; 13 remain under investigation. Dave Newlin, an organizer with Utah Against Police Brutality, said he believes there needs to be increased accountability for officers who use deadly force.

"There's no real oversight, and there's no real consequences for police officers who do shoot people," he said. "... This is going to become more consistent unless we do something about it."

Newlin said he and other police watchdog advocates are meeting with Salt Lake City council members this week to propose a new citizen oversight board to review deadly force and complaints involving police. Salt Lake City's existing Civilian Review Board can review police actions and make recommendations to the department, but their decisions are not binding.

"They have absolutely no power to do anything at all," Newlin said. "They offer a limited recommendation that everyone can just ignore. It goes out into the ether and nobody pays any attention to it. What we do see are more and more police shootings every year. Until we have real teeth [for] our investigative oversight body, we're just going to see this happen over and over again."

Bret Rawson, general counsel for the Utah Fraternal Order of Police, acknowledged that the past month has been exceptionally deadly. But he cautioned that justification for deadly force is a nuanced legal issue and review requires law enforcement expertise.

"I would be concerned about any oversight from anybody that isn't specifically trained to understand the manner in which law enforcement officers have been instructed to undertake their duties," Rawson said.

"Usually what that means is we need folks that are in law enforcement —executive level individuals who have been through the training, who understand the dangers and specifically the ways that the state has directed officers to conduct themselves when facing [violent threats]," Rawson said.

Apart from Friday night's shootings, police have killed 12 other people so far this year:

- * Jason Robert Whittle, 26, was shot by Unified Police who were investigating a domestic violence report near 1400 West and Stone Ridge Lane on Oct. 22 in Riverton. Police said Whittle was threatening a woman with a knife.

- * Andrey Tkachenko, 23, was chased into a Salt Lake City alley by a fugitive apprehension team Oct. 18, police said. As officers confronted Tkachenko, one UPD officer and one Saratoga Springs officer opened fire, killing him. Investigators found a handgun at the scene, police said.

- * James Lyle Kuehn, 61, was suspected of using a knife to try to rob a restaurant Oct. 17 in Kearns, but fled when an employee swung a large cheese knife at him, police said. A witness followed Kuehn to a nearby house, according to jail documents, and directed police there. UPD officers confronted Kuehn, who did not follow their commands to drop his knife, police wrote. Officers shot Kuehn after a Taser did not subdue him, police wrote.

- * Jacob E. Albrethsen, 17, was shot Oct. 15 by Orem police who were investigating a reported "family problem," officers said. Albrethsen threatened officers with a knife, police said.

- * Diamonte Riviore, 22, was shot and killed Oct. 11 by a West Jordan officer who was investigating a domestic violence report. Police said Riviore threatened officers with a knife.

- * Abe Martinez, 44, walked out of an Arizona halfway house June 16 after serving prison time for drug trafficking and stabbing a jail guard. The next day he traveled to his grandmother's home in South Salt Lake, where he killed her and critically injured her husband. SWAT officers who were gathered outside the home heard screams and fatally shot Martinez through a window.

- * Zane James, 18, was suspected of robbing two Sandy grocery stores May 29 when he was spotted by an off-duty Cottonwood Heights officer who was driving to work, police said. After a chase, James crashed near 6700 S. 2200 East, police said. Officers told prosecutors who investigated the shooting that James ran away and began reaching into his pockets and clothes despite officers' orders to stop and show his hands. Cottonwood Heights Officer Casey Davies fired twice, hitting James both times.

- * Michael Glad, 23, was suspected of robbing a Taylorsville convenience store May 28 when an officer stopped

him. Glad pointed a gun at the officer and stole his police truck, body camera video showed. Two other West Jordan Police officers fired at the truck as Glad tried to drive away, according to report from prosecutors. Officers later discovered that Glad's gun was a pellet gun.

* Delorean Pikyavit, 32, was shot April 17 by Salt Lake City police after his girlfriend went to a neighbor's house and reported a domestic dispute at her home in Sugar House. Officers smelled natural gas at the house and said Pikyavit threatened to ignite a lighter, so they turned off the gas to the house. After a standoff, Pikyavit came outside with a knife and scissors; officers fired on him as he stepped off the porch, one shooting a rifle and the other firing "less-lethal" sponge bullets.

* Lonnie Marcel Bowen, 41, was shot April 17 by Unified Police as he held a knife to a woman's throat in his truck in Magna, police said. UPD Officer Trever McLelland fired five shots into the driver's side window, killing Bowen.

* Elijah James Smith, 20, was shot April 8, when West Valley City police were searching for someone suspected of stealing from a cellphone store on Redwood Road. Smith ran from police, who found him hiding in a garage. When officers yelled at him to put his hands up, he raised one hand and pulled a screwdriver out of his pocket with the other. Officer Nicholas Green fired three shots at Smith, killing him.

* Bryan Keith Liles, 31, was shot March 13 by a federal agent who was searching for another man at a parking lot near a Sandy train station. When officers asked Liles for his ID, he said he would get it out of his car. He got into a BMW and began driving it as an officer reached in to stop him. Another agent, Brian Embley of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, fired on Liles. Liles stopped the car, and Embley told him to put up his hands. Instead Liles reached for the floor of the car, and Embley fired on him again.

Credit: By Erin Alberty

DETAILS

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