

UK police watchdog justifies killing of Mark Duggan

By Robert Stevens
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The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), which has been involved in the cover-up of every police shooting, has cleared the police of wrongdoing or misconduct in the killing of Mark Duggan.

Duggan, a 29-year-old father of six, was unarmed when he was shot twice in Tottenham, north London by an armed police officer on August 4, 2011. Known only as V53, the police officer belonged to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) CO19 Tactical Support Team. The IPCC exonerates the police, concluding that Duggan was killed with “reasonable and proportionate force.”

Duggan’s death was the spark for riots that began just two days later in Tottenham and which quickly spread across the country.

He was killed after the taxi he was travelling in was stopped, in a pre-planned operation, in Ferry Lane. Duggan was shot dead by police only seconds after three police cars surrounded and stopped the taxi.

No evidence has ever been presented that Duggan was a threat to the police who killed him. At the coroner’s inquest into his killing, held last year, the only independent eyewitness to the shooting—known as “B”—said that Duggan raised his hands in surrender and looked “trapped and baffled” before being shot twice—the second time straight through his chest. A pathologist said that Duggan was dead within “10 heartbeats” of that shot.

The IPCC report took three-and-a-half years to produce and is a travesty. Central to its terms of reference was to “investigate the accounts provided by the CO19 officers and surrounding evidence to identify whether they may have committed criminal offences... including whether V53 used lawful force.”

The police said that Duggan was being tracked and

followed as they had information that he had a gun in his possession. No gun was found on Duggan’s person, but one was recovered about 14 feet away from his body in a grassed area beyond railings on Ferry Lane. No trace of Duggan’s DNA or fingerprints were found on the gun, or the sock that it is said to have been wrapped in. The gun had not been fired.

Lawyers for the family alleged at the inquest that police had removed the gun from the taxi and planted it in the grass. This was reported by a witness who gave evidence to the IPCC. The IPCC report dismisses this testimony, claiming, “There is no credible evidence that JMA/1 [the gun] was thrown or planted by the police.”

The IPCC report states, without presenting any evidence, “that the most plausible explanation for how the firearm came to be located on the grass next to Ferry Lane is that Mr Duggan got out of the minicab with the firearm and was in the process of throwing the firearm to his right as he was shot.”

The report continues that “W70”, one of the CO19 officers, “said he only saw a glimpse of the firearm in Mr Duggan’s right hand as Mr Duggan pulled his hand up, just before the shots were fired. V53 [the officer who killed Duggan] said that he saw the firearm in Mr Duggan’s right hand and that Mr Duggan was moving the firearm in his direction but that he did not see what happened to the firearm after he fired the two shots.”

The IPCC clears the police even though it notes, “None of the CO19 officers can account for how the firearm ended up in this position on the grassed area. None of them said they saw it travel through the air to the grassed area.”

The accounts of the CO19 officers are not credible and even the IPCC said it was “surprising” that none of the police saw the gun.

The IPCC's findings contradict the verdict of the inquest jury, which, while perversely finding that Duggan had been lawfully killed, found that he did not have a gun in his hand when he was shot dead.

Even if one were to believe the police version of events, now backed up by the IPCC, Duggan was *throwing away the firearm in his possession—one that was wrapped in a sock*—when he was shot dead. He posed no possible threat.

The IPCC has been implicated in the cover-up of the circumstances surrounding Duggan's death from the outset. It initially told journalists that Duggan had opened fire on police. The IPCC was forced to acknowledge this was a lie, but not until eight days after Duggan's killing, when it admitted disseminating "misleading information".

During the interim period this allowed the media, politicians and police to broadcast a false narrative that the police had no option but to kill Duggan, invariably described a violent gangster, in self-defence.

Welcoming the report, Met Assistant Commissioner Patricia Gallan declared, "Last year the jury at the inquest found that our officers acted lawfully when they confronted an *armed criminal who they believed posed a threat to them and to the public*," [emphasis added]. The BBC noted, "She urged people to study the report, based on 1,200 documents, 500 witness statements and 340 exhibits."

This is a fraud. Anything that contradicts the claims of the police has been summarily dismissed by the IPCC's report. The report claims there is "no credible evidence" to support complaints by Duggan's family that police had relocated the firearm in the sock, that officer V53 did not fire live shots in the belief that Duggan was pointing a firearm at him, and that he did not use lawful force.

Regarding the version of events given by police officer V53, who killed Duggan, the IPCC report states, "The investigation has not obtained any reliable evidence to undermine V53's account."

This is baldly asserted even though it acknowledges that V53 refused to give a statement to the IPCC. The report notes: "The lack of an open face-to-face dialogue limits the extent to which the IPCC can effectively probe and verify the detail of his account."

Following the publication of the IPCC report, Pamela Duggan, Mark Duggan's mother, told the *Guardian*,

"The IPCC has found that the police did nothing wrong when they murdered my son. This report is another slap in the face for all the family, it's a waste of paper and a waste of ink. IPCC officials came to my house after the shooting. We cooperated with them, they listened to us and said they would help us. They've been working on this report for three-and-a-half years since Mark was shot dead and this is what they have come up with."

The media has taken the IPCC's findings as a cue to conceal the central issue—that an unarmed man was killed in cold blood by the police. Duggan has been branded a notorious "gangster" and "thug", despite only two petty convictions—for cannabis possession and handling stolen goods—and having no custodial record. The implication of this narrative is that he got what was coming to him.

In its article celebrating the IPCC findings the *Daily Mail* described him as a "gangster" on seven occasions, including a headline referring to him as a "fleeing gangster."

Whatever the personal character of Mark Duggan, and there is no reason to uncritically accept the torrent of abuse thrown at him by the media, the fact remains that under no circumstances does this justify his cold-blooded murder.

As his family has maintained, Mark Duggan was executed and his killing was unlawful.

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