

Notes on police violence in America

## Louisiana sheriff uses anti-Semitic slur, threatens to shoot federal prosecutor

By E.P. Bannon  
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Iberia Parish Sheriff Louis Ackal, currently under federal investigation over prisoner abuse, allegedly made anti-Semitic remarks against one of the federal prosecutors and threatened to shoot him between the eyes. Ackal's remarks are evidence that police forces in America serve as a breeding ground for far-right and fascist politics.

According to *The Advocate*, court documents filed last week allege that Ackal called a prosecutor a "sorry son-of-a-bitch Jew bastard" and made remarks about shooting him between his "g\*\*\*\*\*d Jewish eyes."

Ackal allegedly made these comments in secretly recorded private discussions. They are believed to have been in reference to Mark Blumberg, a Justice Department lawyer that had previously met with Ackal prior to his indictment. The court filing claims the recording of the conversations was made by an "unsolicited informant" who provided them to federal authorities.

He described a situation where a prosecutor told him, "I'm gonna put you in prison" and allegedly proposed a deal in which the sheriff would provide investigators with information regarding the case. "You know about these people. You can give them to us," Ackal said, quoting the federal prosecutor. "I said the only thing I'm gonna give you—f\*\*\*\*\*g shoot you right between your g\*\*\*\*\*d Jewish-eyes-look-like-opossum bastard."

Prosecutors argued to the court that the comments represented threats in an appeal to impose tougher restrictions on Ackal pending a federal trial.

The sheriff is currently under investigation as part of a broader federal probe of inmate abuse and cover-ups at the Sheriff's Office. The investigation has already

secured guilty pleas from nine deputies and implicates one of his top supervisors as well as a captain.

Ackal allegedly directed the beating of inmates, instructing deputies to "take care" of certain men. Inmates allegedly found themselves the victim of savage reprisal for as little as making improper comments toward deputies. The investigation focuses on a series of 2011 beatings that allegedly took place within the jail chapel, a spot chosen because there were no surveillance cameras.

In the most particularly revealing case, one inmate had allegedly been beaten with extreme prejudice for writing letters complaining of the deplorable conditions within the jail.

The insufferable conditions of American prisons have sparked recent unrest amongst the inmate population. Last month, prisoners at the Waupun prison in the Midwestern state of Wisconsin initiated a hunger strike in protest of the "hellish" conditions within the prison, particularly for those in solitary confinement.

In May, inmates at three different Alabama prisons launched a coordinated labor strike against deteriorating conditions and unfair labor practices. The Alabama prison strikers' grievances included dangerous levels of overcrowding, filthy living conditions, lack of access to cleaning supplies, foul drinking water that smelled and tasted of chemicals, brutal reprisals from prison guards over minor offenses, and the contracting out of prison labor to private for-profit companies.

The US Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office back in 1996—before Ackal was sheriff—over similar allegations of prisoner abuse. In this case, prison officials disciplined inmates

by restraining them to a chair with straps and handcuffs or gagging them with duct tape. Inmates would often be left restrained for periods so long they were forced to urinate or defecate on themselves.

### **Louisiana sheriff's officers savagely beat 19-year-old youth suspected of murder**

Jefferson Parish Sheriff Newell Normand told local news that he has asked the FBI to initiate a "joint investigation" into the savage beating of 19-year-old murder suspect Jerman Neveaux. The beating was captured on video and submitted to a local news station.

In an indication that a coverup of the incident is being prepared, Normand described the content of the video as full of "unresolved" questions. He claimed officers were simply "trying to get Neveaux under control and get his gun." Neveaux has been accused of shooting and killing a sheriff's deputy last month.

Authorities claim Neveaux shot Detective David Michel three times after Michel tried to search him in the New Orleans suburb of Harvey. Law enforcement initiated a manhunt and later found him in a backyard. Officials beat the young man so severely that he required medical treatment for an orbital fracture, broken ribs and a broken jaw, as well as cuts and scrapes to his face.

His grandmother, Yvette Neveaux, told local news he weighed only 95 pounds, calling him a "toothpick." She said her grandson had been staying with her as he tried to find a job.

Sheriff's officials described Neveaux as a "cold-blooded murderer," claiming that he shot the deputy because he was on probation and was not supposed to be in possession of a firearm. He currently faces four charges: first degree murder, assault, battery on a police officer, and resisting arrest.

### **Louisiana state trooper body slams, seriously injures Chicago doctor over non-violent offense**

A state trooper in the French Quarter of New Orleans body-slammed a man during an arrest on a Saturday night at 4 a.m. last month. Thirty-nine-year-old Michael Hoffman, a Chicago doctor, suffered multiple injuries, including a laceration on his side as well as serious bruising. His attorney, Steve London, claimed he was "absolutely astounded" by the state trooper's

indiscriminate use of force.

"I can't see any reason why that was necessary," London told *The Advocate*. "The man's a medical doctor. He doesn't travel in that type of circle where you all of a sudden have a physical confrontation with the police." He stated that the man had returned to Illinois for additional medical evaluation over an injury related to his chest compression. "If you throw somebody on concrete like that and you're on top of them, can you imagine what it does to your chest?"

The incident occurred when Hoffman refused to walk away from a verbal argument at the Beach on Bourbon bar in the French Quarter. Hoffman had placed a 911 phone call complaining that bartenders refused to return his debit card. Authorities claim the trooper was an off-duty officer who had been flagged down by bartenders to make Hoffman leave the premises.

The video shows the officer gruffly ordering Hoffman and his friend to "take a walk." When they stop to try to reason with him, he suddenly grabs Hoffman's friend and throws him with all his weight into a row of garbage cans. He then pulls Hoffman's right arm behind him, pushes him inside a nearby restaurant, lifts him up into the air, then slams him on his stomach on to the concrete floor as hard as he can.

Louisiana State Police have stated that the State Trooper did not employ any excessive use of force whatsoever and refuse to open an internal investigation into the matter.

Despite numerous recent federal probes and empty reform initiatives in Louisiana and throughout the country, law enforcement continues to assume an arrogant and thuggish character. Rather than a last resort, police officers employ violence on a regular basis to suspects of major and minor offenses alike.

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