

Indiana teachers shot ‘execution style’ with plastic pellets during school shooting drill

By George Marlowe
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Several Indiana teachers in the city of Monticello were recently shot “execution style” with plastic pellets in an active school shooting drill, provoking widespread outrage. The drill was conducted in January by the local sheriff’s office in partnership with the school district.

The violence meted out against these educators by law enforcement officials took place in the midst of a wave of mass strikes by teachers across the United States and internationally.

The Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA), the teachers union that covers more than 40,000 Indiana teachers, posted a Twitter statement earlier this week noting, “During active shooter drill, four teachers at a time were taken into a room, told to crouch down and were shot execution style with some sort of projectiles—resulting in injuries to the extent that welts appeared, and blood was drawn.”

The ISTA statement added, “The teachers were terrified, but were told not to tell anyone what happened. Teachers waiting outside that heard the screaming were brought into the room four at a time and the shooting process was repeated.”

The shooting drill took place at Meadowlawn Elementary, which is part of the Twin Lakes School Corporation located in White County, Indiana. The drill was part of a so-called ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) training procedure developed by a private security company. Schools across the country have increasingly become militarized since the Columbine high school massacre in Colorado in 1999, partnering with the political establishment, law enforcement agencies and private security companies.

The training protocol for ALICE was developed by security consultant Greg Crane, a former SWAT police officer who entered the education security business to profit from the fear and anxiety over school shootings. ALICE training methods call for students and teachers to fight back against shooters. Crane’s company has aggressively pushed for the adoption of such safety training methods by more

than 300 schools and universities.

Psychologist Dr. Stephen Brock of the National Association of School Psychologists has been a vocal critic of such methods, which he says have not been tested and will instead cause unnecessary anxiety and trauma for educators and students. He deemed the training a “potentially dangerous” overreaction unsupported by any research which may actually increase danger in the event of an actual shooting.

Two elementary school teachers from Monticello testified on Wednesday in front of state lawmakers at the Indiana state Capitol building about the horrific incident. The teachers, who did not want to be named for fear of retaliation, told the *Indianapolis Star* that law enforcement officials had them kneel against their classroom wall before being shot with the plastic pellets on their back without any warning.

One of the teachers said, “They told us, ‘this is what happens if you cower and do nothing.’” She added, “They shot all of us across our backs. I was hit four times. It hurt so bad.”

Another teacher spoke to the *New York Times* on Friday stating that in addition to execution-style drills the law enforcement trainers fired pellets during multiple training exercises. She was told by the trainers “to try to not get hit.”

White County Sheriff Bill Brooks deflected blame for the incident and said the teachers had agreed to the training. “They all knew they could be [shot],” he told the *Star*. “It’s a shooting exercise.” However, teachers were not given any warning that they would be shot, let alone by plastic pellets, and none of them were asked about their medical histories prior to being subjected to physical violence.

One teacher was hurt so badly she had bruises, welts and bloody cuts that took two weeks to heal. Speaking of the frightful experience, the teacher added, “You don’t know who you are shooting and what types of experience those individuals had in the past, whether they had PTSD or anything else. And we didn’t know what we were going into.”

Workers across the country spoke out on social media against the violent drill and psychological abuse by law enforcement officials.

“Mock executions are literally torture,” Leo said on Twitter. “Can you imagine what was going through their minds when they heard the gunshots, felt projectiles hit the back of their heads, and started actually bleeding? Anyone would assume that something had gone wrong and they had been shot.”

“I don’t think giving your teachers PTSD helps anything,” another person commented on Twitter. Another added, “What was done to the teachers was criminal assault. It will cause PTSD in some of those teachers and for what? How does pretending to execute teachers make the school safer? HOW? The United States has gone completely batshit crazy!”

“This is psychological abuse and should NEVER happen without preliminary warning and consent given to participate,” Jolie noted.

“We should not be torturing people and putting them through a scenario where they are being fake-shot or being put through the pain of being shot,” Jane, an Indiana teacher, told the WSWS. “To inflict bodily harm upon anybody—a teacher, a student or anybody—is not fair. There should have been a waiver for people signing off before they were physically harmed. We all understand what it means to be shot, or to be killed. Teachers should not be put through the physical violence of this sort.”

Speaking about recent efforts by lawmakers calling for educators to be armed in the classroom in response to school shootings, Jane added, “I don’t think we should be carrying guns in our classroom either.”

On Wednesday, ISTA lobbied in favor of House Bill 1004, which purports to make changes to the Indiana safe schools grants program. According to the union HB 1004 would provide funding for mental health and social and emotional services to students at schools. Referring to their lobbying efforts, the union bragged on Facebook, “This is an example of what ISTA does. We speak out for our members and advocate for you at the Statehouse.”

In fact, ISTA has done little to defend teachers from the violence of such training drills or to protect and defend teachers, students and public education at large. The union has collaborated with Democrats and Republicans to keep teacher pay low and education funding at one of the lowest levels across the country. Teachers in Indiana rallied against low pay and against attacks on public education earlier in March, with many calling for strikes and walkouts which the union has vocally opposed.

One worker, Mel, noted the hypocrisy of ISTA on Facebook, “You’re doing a pathetically lame job. Instead of

just quibbling with the government asking them to please, pretty please, maybe not allow teachers to be shot by out-of-control law enforcement under the guise of ‘training’, you should have made national news of this incident the day it happened, and filed a lawsuit on behalf of the teachers. And demand that the people who did the shooting be held criminally responsible.”

The increasingly regular eruption of incidents of mass violence in the United States is above all a reflection of immense social tensions and a society that has become increasingly militarized. The US is a cauldron of unprecedented social inequality produced by capitalism while the entire political establishment has prosecuted endless militarism and wars for more than two decades.

It is impossible to separate incidents of mass violence from its deeper causes. Homicidal acts of violence by individuals from the Columbine shooting to the Parkland massacre last year are above all a reflection of their deep alienation from a society that brutalizes millions every single day. Millions have been killed by US foreign policy abroad and by increasing poverty, drug addiction, rising suicide rates, police killings and workplace deaths at home.

The response of the political establishment to school shootings is to further militarize every aspect of life, including schools.

The growth of school shootings has spurred on the development of a multi-billion dollar private security industry. According to a report by IHS Markit, the security industry in education produced more than \$2.7 billion in revenue in 2017. Many students will find that their school has a police officer on duty but no counselor or nurse. Schools are increasingly under various forms of surveillance , from 20 percent of schools being surveilled in 1999 to more than 70 percent since 2013. Private companies are also being deployed to spy on students’ social media, according to reports by the ACLU.

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