

# Police Shootings in Utah Under Public Scrutiny

---

 [badboysbailbondsutah.com/police-shootings-in-utah-under-public-scrutiny](http://badboysbailbondsutah.com/police-shootings-in-utah-under-public-scrutiny)

UTAH POLICE DEPARTMENTS

## UNDER FIRE FOR USING FORCE



Are police officers using excessive force that isn't justifiable? This question is being asked nationwide, as videos have shown police officers using force to stop victims who are unarmed. In the Utah cases of Danielle Willard, Dillon Taylor, and even the dog named Geist, Utahans are asking if police officers are using excessive force unnecessarily.

## Cases of Excessive Force by Police in Utah

---

### **Danielle Willard**

In the Danielle Willard case, Utah police shot Willard during a drug raid after she was reportedly "seen" buying drugs. Some witnesses said Willard tried to "ram" police with her vehicle, though reconstructions of the scene of her death suggested the officer firing the fatal shot stood by Willard's vehicle, not in front of it. Her death raises the questions of whether police take too many liberties with their power and why there is a lack of transparency in the Salt Lake City Police Department. Salt Lake City District Attorney Sim Gill ruled the shooting and Willard's death as "not justifiable" after officers' accounts were not consistent with evidence presented. Officers claimed there were drugs in her system, but no drugs were found and tire marks at the scene did not support the theory Willard peeled out at the scene. There was no evidence that Willard attempted to harm officers. Her 2012 death isn't the first time doubt has been cast on the actions of officers in the Salt Lake City police force.

## Dillon Taylor

Police appeared in riot gear and one was wearing a body camera when they confronted Dillon Taylor. Taylor had been described by witnesses as having robbed a convenience store. But, he was wearing headphones and couldn't clearly hear officers' requests to get on the ground. Officers reported Taylor was combative, pointing to footage from an officer's body camera. Salt Lake City District Attorney Sim Gill ruled the shooting justifiable, given Taylor's actions in a 30-second video. However, many Utahans question using military-grade weapons on civilians.

**"Comply or die is not the law. We are NOT subjects, we are citizens."**

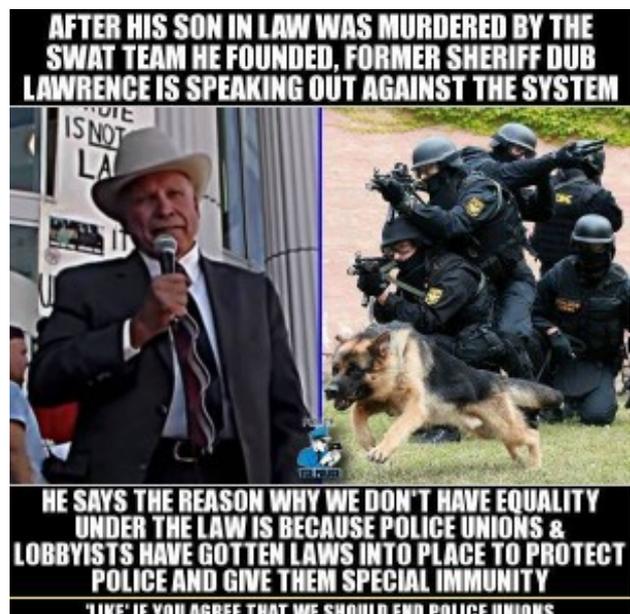
- Edward Peltekian

at Utah Rally Against  
Excessive Use of Police Force

Can police use force if they "perceive" a threat, even when no threat exists? In the Darrien Hunt case, witnesses reported Hunt had a sword. However, family members reported he was costumed and carried a toy katana. Family of Hunt say the young African-American was no threat in a community. A drive-through bank camera captured footage of Hunt fleeing police.

## Did Taylor and Willard need to Die?

This is a question many Utahans are asking since Willard and Taylor had no weapons. Cameras used in police shootings may not be reliable because they are turned off or footage may be altered. According to Dub Lawrence, former Sheriff for Davis County, police officers may entrap and use force when the public cannot. Officers are held to a higher standard and have immunities citizens do not. For example, a police officer has 24 to 48 hours to file a report if someone dies. They also can lie during an interrogation. Lawrence spoke at an event Oct. 4 and called for citizens to question police officers' transparency.



## **Need for a National Database That Tracks Police Shootings Nationwide**

---

Is there a way for Utahans to get the facts in a case, such as Hunt's, Willard's or Taylor's? Some citizens may feel officers may not be telling the truth. However, there is no nationwide computer system to check facts.

USA Today reports from University of South Carolina criminologist Geoff Alpert, who has long studied police use of deadly force, said the FBI's limited database underscores a gaping hole in the nation's understanding of how often local police take a life on America's streets — and under what circumstances.

"There is no national database for this type of information, and that is so crazy," said Alpert. "We've been trying for years, but nobody wanted to fund it and the (police) departments didn't want it. They were concerned with their image and liability. They don't want to bother with it."

Alpert said the database can confirm that a death has occurred but is good for little else.

"I've looked at records in hundreds of departments," Alpert said, "and it is very rare that you find someone saying, 'Oh, gosh, we used excessive force.' In 98.9% of the cases, they are stamped as justified and sent along."

## **How to Reduce Police Shootings in Utah**

---

What is the best way to handle situations where suspects or victims seem unarmed? Should police use non-lethal means? Utah's laws allow for deadly force, allowing Utah school teachers to carry guns in the classroom. Until lawmakers are willing to revisit laws, ordinary citizens may not be able to defend themselves if officers decide someone's actions justify using deadly force. But, what constitutes the need to use deadly force over non-deadly force? Without direction from lawmakers, police officers may make their own laws and break them without consequence. According to Duff, this is why ordinary citizens need to know what changes lawmakers are considering for bills and officers be held to the same transparency citizens have.

## **Will Removing Military Grade Weapons or Wearing Body Cameras Help Reduce Police Shootings in Utah?**

---

Would having cameras and banning military-grade weapons stop officers from killing unarmed civilians? Would it matter in the police by suicide cases? According to Lawrence, having military-grade equipment gives police officers in Utah and elsewhere an unfair advantage. Not all Utahans want military weapons removed. Eighty-three percent of Utahans want weapons to be used responsibly and have advocated non-lethal alternatives, such as tear gas or rubber bullets. Many Utahans have questioned whether officers should wear cameras, because cameras can be turned off.

# Utahans Call for More Transparency in Regards to Use of Lethal Force by Police

---

Why aren't police by suicide valid in cases such as Taylor's, Hunt's or Willard's? In Hunt's case, the police determined from the trajectory of bullets that Hunt was fleeing the scene and not being confrontational. Thus, this rules out the police by suicide defense, where police can rule a shooting as "police by suicide" if a victim threatens to harm an officer. Many Utahans question if police officers need checks and balances. According to Dub Lawrence, a former marine, police officer, and SWAT, demand officers be transparent in order for laws to change. Listen to Dub Lawrence here speak about exactly what the problem in Utah is.

Utahans are petitioning to recall the current Mayor of Salt Lake City, Ralph Becker, citing his inaction regarding use of excessive police force. Utahans want a mayor who is ready and willing to take action to represent the wants and needs of it's people. You can visit [Change.org](https://www.change.org) to sign the petition recalling the current mayor.

## Holding the Men in Blue to a Higher Standard

---

In the minds of many Utahans, the actions of Salt Lake City's finest have shown many police officers abuse the power they are given and not face any consequences. Many Utahans are outraged because officers do not have to answer for their actions, as no officers in Hunt, Willard, or the Taylor cases had disciplinary actions levied against them. Shouldn't police officers held to a higher standard? An example of this may be bus drivers across the nation. A bus driver has a Class B and Class C license. In the government's eyes, bus drivers should be better drivers than the everyday man, and held to a higher standard. A bus driver is expected to be better and are fined more severely when they receive traffic violations.

Many Utahans expect the same of their law enforcement officers and demand Utah's finest take responsibility for actions. Unfortunately, some police officers, Utahns feel, have used the law to cater to their needs. It has allowed Utah police to not only get away with murder, but commit it with excessive force in some cases. Attorneys in the Hunt and also in the Willard case have proven there was no reason for either Hunt or Willard to be shot an excess of four times, to more than six times for Hunt.

## Is Deadly Force Needed as Much as it's Used?

---

Readers commenting on the Saratoga Springs case, called for the truth. While the use of force may be warranted in this case, many Utahans do not believe all police officers are villains. There are good officers. But, the problem lies in how we assume innocence, based on appearances. Many Utahans simply want Salt Lake City Police Department to be accountable and use other means before using lethal means.

Tell us your thoughts -- What do you think will make the difference? How can we protect our officers AND citizens?

If you or a loved one is arrested on suspicion of a crime, contact Bad Boys Bail Bonds Utah to request bail. We are here when you need us, 24 hours a day 7 days a week. We will get you out on our bail 365 days.