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By Patrick Martin
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US press reports confirm killing of Portland anti-fascist was targeted police assassination

Two new press investigations have brought forward important evidence that the police killing of anti-fascist activist Michael Reinhoehl on September 3 was a targeted assassination.

President Trump and Attorney General William Barr have repeatedly hailed the killing of Reinhoehl as a model of how to deal with left-wing political opposition. Nearly every Trump campaign rally features the president celebrating the actions of the US Marshals unit that hunted down Reinhoehl, with Trump boasting of his personal role in ordering what is now shown to be a cold-blooded police murder.

The *New York Times*, in a report published Wednesday on its website, cited accounts by bystanders and police officers that Reinhoehl was riddled with bullets while his handgun remained in his pocket, unused. A report by *ProPublica* and Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) published late Tuesday found that police gave no warning to the fugitive when they opened fire on him.

Reinhoehl had fled to Lacey, Washington, a suburb of Olympia, about 120 miles north of Portland, Oregon after killing an armed fascist attacker in a shootout on August 29. Reinhoehl said he had been working as security for ongoing demonstrations against police violence in Portland and fired in defense of a fellow protester who was being attacked by Aaron J. Danielson. The right-wing Trump supporter was armed with bear mace and a handgun.



Michael Forest Reinhoehl

On the day of his killing, Reinhoehl was getting into his car in the parking lot of an apartment complex when two unmarked SUVs pulled up next to his vehicle and members of a US

Marshals task force, recruited from among local and Washington state police, opened fire on him.

Earlier press reports suggested that the police were tracking Reinoehl through his cell phone while they applied for a warrant to allow them to legally determine his location. One hour and 14 minutes after the judge approved the warrant, the police apparently followed the cell phone signal to Reinoehl's location and shot him dead.

Two of the police officers involved in the shooting have told investigators that they did not see Reinoehl raise a weapon before the firing began, the *Times* reported. None of the police say they saw him fire any shots.

The *Times* account states: "Five eyewitnesses said in interviews that the gunfire began the instant the vehicles arrived. None of them saw Mr. Reinoehl holding a weapon. ...

"Garrett Louis, who watched the shooting begin while trying to get his eight-year-old son out of the line of fire, said the officers arrived with such speed and violence that he initially assumed they were drug dealers gunning down a foe—until he saw their law enforcement vests."

Witness after witness confirmed that police emerged from their vehicles and began firing without warning. "There was no, 'Get out of the car!' There was no, 'Stop!' There was no nothing. They just got out of the car and started shooting," Louis told the *Times*.

Another witness, Chad Smith, said. "There was no yelling. There was no screaming. There was no altercation. It was just straight to gunshots."

Four police fired 30 rounds from four weapons, two handguns and two assault rifles. They claim to have recovered a single expended handgun shell inside the car, although the gun from which it supposedly came was still in Reinoehl's pocket.

Ricochet bullets from the fusillade narrowly missed Louis's son and the brother of another witness, and spent bullets were found elsewhere in the immediate neighborhood.

ProPublica and Oregon Public Broadcasting interviewed some of the same eyewitnesses to the police murder of Reinoehl. They agreed that no warning was given and that police opened fire as soon as they pulled up next to his car.

Remarkably, by this account, the Thurston County Sheriff's Department, which is handling the formal investigation into Reinoehl's death, has not yet interviewed three of the eyewitnesses, including Garrett Louis.

ProPublica and OPB also cited Louis's account of his actions after the shooting. A former medic in the military, now working as a carpenter, Louis hurried over to offer his assistance to the victim—Reinoehl—but was driven away by the police, who cursed him.

This report said of another witness, "She thought the shooters—buff white men dressed in khakis and ballistic vests and armed with rifles—looked less like law enforcement officers than members of a right-wing militia."

The *ProPublica* and OPB account includes an interview with Deavan Reinoehl, the teenage son of the anti-fascist activist, who reported that about five hours after the killing of Danielson, in the early morning hours of August 30, several trucks drove by the home he shared with his father and sister and opened fire. He called his father and Reinoehl came home, removed the children to safety, and took flight.

After fleeing Portland, Reinoehl contacted news media outlets and expressed the concern that he could not turn himself in safely but was being hunted to death. This fear was entirely justified, as events proved.

The killing of Danielson followed a series of Trump-directed interventions in Portland against an unbroken series of protests over police brutality and violence, going back to the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis cops on May 25. Trump sent heavily armed federal agents into Portland, including the paramilitary BORTAC force from Immigration and

Customs Enforcement, and left-wing protesters were snatched off the streets and carried away in unmarked vehicles.

As the protests continued, Trump claimed the city of Portland was under anarchist rule because local Democratic Party officials, including the mayor and governor, made mild criticisms of the violent attacks by federal forces. He encouraged fascistic groups like the Proud Boys to invade Portland and attack the demonstrations against police violence.

There were increasingly violent clashes in which ultra-rightists in pickup trucks drove by crowds of protesters firing paint ball weapons and tear gas at them while making a display of firearms. It was during one such onslaught that Reinoehl shot Danielson, who was part of a group of violent thugs attacking the protesters.

Attorney General William Barr hailed the killing of what he called “an admitted Antifa member” as a “significant accomplishment in the ongoing effort to restore law and order.” He claimed that the shooting of Reinoehl was justified because he was attempting to escape and “produced a firearm.”

This account has been exposed as a lie from beginning to end. Reinoehl had a handgun in his pocket and an assault rifle in a closed bag in his car. He “produced” neither before he was shot repeatedly by the police.

President Trump called on Portland police to arrest (or perhaps eliminate) Reinoehl. He issued a tweet only an hour before the shootout, demanding, “Do your job and do it fast.” He later declared, referring to the shooting of Danielson, an adherent of a group called Patriot Prayer, “There has to be retribution when you have crime like this.”

He again raised the killing of Reinoehl as a great achievement during the first presidential debate with former Vice President Joe Biden. The Democratic candidate made no objection.

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