

WATCHDOG REPORT

U.S. police shootings fueling black extremism

By JAY REEVES
Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — The public backlash against police shootings of black people is helping fuel the growth of black hate groups, some of which advocate retaliatory violence against law enforcement, watchdog groups said Monday.

The Southern Poverty Law Center counted 113 groups advocating black separatism, black supremacy or some other extreme, black-centric ideology in the United States in 2014. By the end of 2015, in the aftermath of last year's killing of a black man by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, the number had grown to 180, an increase of nearly 60 percent in less than a year.

The center says the number of Ku Klux Klan groups grew even more during the same period, but experts say much of that change was linked to the splintering of larger groups rather than real growth.

No one knows exactly how many people have been drawn to black extremist groups, but there's no reason to believe the growth of violent ideology is slowing. Last week's protests of police shootings in Louisiana and Minnesota have only spread since a black sniper killed five police officers at a demonstration in Dallas.

"It draws people to their ranks, people who are mad about what is going on with law enforcement," said Heidi Beirich, director of the Alabama-based center's Intelligence Project, which tracks extremist organizations.

People who join such organizations might not pose the biggest threat anyway, said Oren Segal of the Anti-Defamation League. He agrees that killings by police and the ensuing protests provide fuel for black extremist groups, but believes exact numbers are

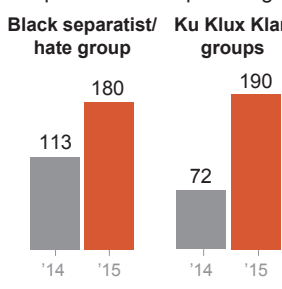


AP Photo/Eric Gay

A protester holds up his fist as he stands behind Dallas police officers at their headquarters, Monday in Dallas. Five police officers were killed and several injured during a shooting in downtown Dallas last Thursday night.

Hate group increase

The number of black separatist groups rose between 2014 and 2015, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. Ku Klux Klan groups also rose during the period due to splintering.



SOURCE: SPLC AP

hard to pin down.

"The most dangerous are those who don't join anything, who get inspired by the militancy or hate, who get influenced by the rhetoric, and act on their own," said Segal, who directs the ADL's Center on Extremism.

Dallas gunman Micah Xavier Johnson apparently fell into this category: The 25-year-old Army veteran wasn't known to be an active member of any group, but he was on Facebook, and followed the feeds of

the New Black Panther Party and the Black Riders Liberation Party.

He also "liked" the African-American Defense League, which formed in 2014 and advocates violence against police and white people in general. The group has gathered more than 870 "likes" on its Facebook page, whose cover photo still showed dozens of military-style weapons days after Johnson killed five white officers.

Beirich said the Intelligence Project tracks hate groups through methods including its own research, reports by media and law enforcement, the groups' own publications, and social media. Some radical black religious organizations also have houses of worship or book stores that can be counted, she said.

But determining a group's true size and reach can be difficult, said the ADL's Segal.

For example, he said, the New Black Panther Party is considered a "hard-core hate group" and members have advocated violence against police, yet it typically stages few events where watch-

dogs can count members, as they do with the KKK or the National Alliance, which are considered white hate groups.

Instead, he said, black extremists often join in demonstrations, and sometimes incite others in the crowd.

Adding to the difficulty is the fact that some black extremist groups use their advocacy of common social issues like eradicating poverty or improving education as a doorway to lead people down a path of militancy, he said.

"They take legitimate social issues that people care about and infuse them with their brand of hatred," said Segal.

The KKK once did the same thing, billing itself as a group that helped poor Southerners even as members were blamed for racial violence. And similar to black extremists, the KKK reported an increase in followers after officials removed Confederate flags in the South following the shooting that killed nine people last year at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Inmate kills two bailiffs at Mich. courthouse

ST. JOSEPH, Mich. (AP) — A jail inmate trying to escape from a western Michigan courthouse wrested a gun from an officer Monday, killing two bailiffs and injuring two more people before he was fatally shot by other officers, a sheriff said.

People scrambled for cover inside the Berrien County Courthouse in St. Joseph, a city of about 8,300 people in the southwestern corner of Michigan, about 100 miles northeast of Chicago.

"Our hearts are torn apart. ... I have known them for over 30 years. It's a sad day," Sheriff Paul Bailey said of the bailiffs.

Larry Darnell Gordon, 44, who was locked up on several felony charges, was being moved from a cell for a courtroom appearance when a fight occurred and he was able to disarm an officer, Bailey said. The sheriff did not say what charges the inmate was facing.

Bailey said it does not appear that Gordon was handcuffed, adding authorities had "no warning signs" that the suspect would be violent.

The inmate shot a sheriff's deputy, killed the bailiffs and then shot a civilian in the arm in a public area, the sheriff said.

During the incident, Bailey said Gordon took hostages for a short period before trying to leave through another door. The inmate then was fatally shot "by two other bailiffs who came to render aid, along with several other officers," Bailey said.

"He was trying to escape," the sheriff said.

Bailey identified the bailiffs killed as Joseph Zangaro, 61, and Ronald Kienzle, 63. He said the longtime law enforcement officers were close friends of his who became court officers after retiring from their departments.



Gordon

Zangaro was head of court security. He retired from the Michigan State Police as commander of the Bridgman Post in Berrien County. Kienzle retired as a sergeant of the Benton Township police department after serving in the U.S. Army.

Both had been employed by the court for more than a decade.

The injuries suffered by the deputy and the civilian weren't considered life-threatening. Bailey said the deputy, 41-year-old James Atterberry Jr., had surgery on his arm and is "doing fine." He said the civilian was a woman who also suffered an arm injury. He did not identify her.

Bailey said the courthouse would be closed on Tuesday.

Gordon's ex-wife, Jessica Gordon, told WOOD-TV and the Detroit Free Press that he likely was trying to escape to see his family. She added that he was "not a monster," but "an amazing man that got mixed up with the wrong people."

Jessica Gordon said they divorced earlier this year but he remained close with his 6-year-old daughter. His ex-wife said she spoke with him Sunday and had no indication he was planning an attack.

CAMPAIGN BRIEFLY

Many holes in GOP presidential ground game in key states

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Presidential battleground states were supposed to be swarming with Republican Party workers by now.

"We've moved on to thousands and thousands of employees," party chairman Reince Priebus declared in March, contrasting that with the GOP's late-blooming staffing four years earlier. "We are covering districts across this country in ways that we've never had before."

That hasn't exactly happened, a state-by-state review conducted by The Associated Press has found.

With early voting beginning in less than three months in some states, the review reveals that the national GOP has delivered only a fraction of the ground forces detailed in discussions with state leaders earlier in the year. And that is leaving anxious local officials waiting for reinforcements to keep pace with Democrat Hillary Clinton in the states that matter most in 2016.

To be sure, the national party actually has notched record levels of fundraising over the past few years and put together a much more robust ground game than it had in 2012.

Sanders to back Clinton. Will supporters follow?

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — It looks as if Bernie Sanders is ready to back Hillary Clinton. But not all his supporters are prepared to give up revolution for realism.

After weeks of stalling as he sought liberal policy concessions from Clinton and lobbied to push the party platform to the left, the Vermont senator is expected to appear with Clinton in New Hampshire Tuesday to endorse her as the Democratic Party presidential nominee.

Still, despite some major victories in the latest draft of the platform and big concerns about presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, many Sanders fans at a Democratic meeting in Orlando over the weekend had clear reservations about casting a ballot for Clinton.

"Personally, I don't think I will support Hillary. I don't trust her," said Lisa Friddle, 53, a nurse from Palm Bay, Florida. "I can't see backing someone I don't believe in." Those sentiments were echoed by Xavier Gaud, 26, of Orlando, who said he would prefer that Sanders run as an independent. If Sanders isn't on the ballot, he said it was "more likely I will support Jill Stein," the leader of the minor Green Party.

A bull market record that doesn't feel like it

By BERNARD CONDON
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — It's a new record for stocks, but it sure doesn't feel like it.

The biggest gainers in the past year are fuddy-duddy utilities. Investors are covering for cover in gold. And the best they're hoping for in the current earnings season is that profits don't fall as much as they initially feared.

It's the second-longest bull market in history, and its old age is showing.

Still, stocks have rewarded investors who had faith to hold on. With a new high for the Standard and Poor's 500 index on Monday, it has tripled since its low in March 2009 during the financial crisis.

"This is one of my favorite days. There's nothing like a new high," says John Manley, chief equity strategist for Wells Fargo Fund Management.

No matter what you think of the stock market — love it, fear it — you've got to admire its resilience.

The market has been hit with a string of bad news in the past year. Plunging oil prices. Falling corporate earnings. Fear over rising interest rates. Slowing growth in China. The British vote to leave the European Union.

There were scary headlines, panic selling, big drops. But there was always another rush to buy.

And so it was in the last two trading days. Since Friday, the Standard and Poor's 500 index has risen 39 points, or 2 percent, hitting 2,137.16. That is about seven points higher than the last record over a year ago.

For all its recent gains, though, the stock market isn't showing great confidence in the future.

Among the 10 sectors of the S&P 500, utilities are up the most, soaring 18 percent since the last high on May 21 last year, according to research firm Bespoke Investment Group. They are mostly bought for their steady dividends payments.

The bond market is signaling trouble, too. Investors tend to load up on government bonds when they're nervous, pushing yields lower. And yields on U.S. government bonds in the past week have fallen to their lowest levels ever.

Jonathan Corpina, senior managing partner at Meridian Equity Partners, thinks the bull market is fragile.

"There's no real conviction behind the buying," he says.

One reason is that compa-

nies have been struggling to increase their earnings.

For much of the bull market, companies have been able to compensate for slow growth in the U.S. by cutting costs to squeeze more profits out of each sale or ramping up exports to faster growing countries overseas.

But they've cut to the bone, and profits margins are falling now, not rising. What's more, many of the overseas markets that helped in the past, particularly ones in the developing world, are slowing or stalling.

You could see this in the dismal profit reports over the past year. According to research firm S&P Global Market Intelligence, earnings per share for companies in the S&P 500 index have fallen for three quarters in a row, nearly unheard of outside of a recession.

Some widely respected gauges of stock market value are signaling trouble, too.

The so-called Shiller earnings ratio, named after Nobel Prize winner Robert Shiller of Yale, compares the price of stocks to annual

earnings averaged over 10 years. The measure is now 26, much higher — meaning more expensive — than the long term average of 18.

The good news is that the U.S. economy appears healthy.

The rally on Friday was set off by a surprisingly strong jobs report for June, suggesting that employers have been confident enough to hire. And more jobs mean more money for consumers to spend, who power 70 percent of U.S. economic output.

With Alcoa reporting results after the close Monday, the second quarter earnings season has unofficially begun. Earnings per share for the S&P 500 are expected to fall 5.4 percent. But there are signs of hope. The financial analysts who follow the companies expect the next two quarters after that will bring gains.

Wells Fargo's Manley is optimistic.

"Consumers will finally start to feel good after being in a funk," he says, "and the rest of the economy will open up."

Hopefully.

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