

# It's Never Been More Dangerous To Be In Law Enforcement

By Joseph Regan, president of the Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of Police

PA. - In Pennsylvania and across the nation, ambush-style shootings of officers have become all too common.

On Feb. 6, 2023, McKeesport Police Officers Sean Sluganski and Chuck Thomas responded to a domestic incident. While appearing to be walking away, the assailant suddenly turned and shot both officers, killing Officer Sluganski and seriously wounding Officer Thomas.

On June 17, 2023, Pennsylvania State Trooper Jacques Rougeau, Jr., was supposed to be off, but put on his uniform and went to work when his station was attacked. Trooper Rougeau was driving down a road when the subject of the manhunt appeared and shot through his windshield at point-blank range. The assailant had earlier shot and seriously wounded State Police Lt. James Wagner.

On Oct. 12, 2023, Philadelphia International Airport. Sgt. Richard C. Mendez and Officer Raul Ortiz were ambushed when trying to stop a car break-in. Ortiz survived, but Mendez, a 23-year veteran of the force, was shot twice and killed, leaving behind his wife and daughter.

On Jan. 11, 2024, while investigating a shooting, Det. Kyle Gilmartin from the Scranton Police Department miraculously survived two gunshots to his head. The assailant walked up to the detective's car and fired five shots at point-blank range into the car.

Across the United States last year, 115 police officers were victims of ambush-style attacks. Tragically, 46 were killed.

The (FBI) has a report entitled: The Assailant Study: Mindset and Behavior. The report identified a disturbing and growing trend of attackers who are motivated by a desire to kill a law enforcement officer. This motivation, the report concludes, is from a "singular narrative that portrays the officer as guilty in traditional and social media and the subject as the victim."

A study by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, which examined law enforcement officer fatalities from 2010-2016, found 20% of ambushed officers were seated in their patrol cars and 56% of officers killed in an ambush were not on a call or engaged in any enforcement activity. Of these, five officers were targeted and killed at home or on their way home.

To deal with this rapid increase of these brazen attempts to surprise – and murder – police officers, U.S. Rep. John Rutherford has introduced H.R. 743, legislation known as "The Protect and Serve Act."

H.R. 743 would make deliberate, calculated ambush-style attacks a federal crime with stiff penalties of 10 years up life for attempted murder or murder. Thus far, it has bi-partisan support from 8 of Pennsylvania's 17 congressional members.

As law enforcement officers, we all accept the risks of our jobs. So do our families. In fact, our families are the real heroes because they live with the very real reality that we may not come home. But these ambush attacks are nothing less than assassinations of police officers.

No officer should be at risk of being targeted while simply sitting in their patrol car, standing post, or heading home at the end of a shift. When a member of the public calls for help, we answer that call.

It's our hope Pennsylvania's entire Congressional delegation will sign on to this important legislation and help with its passage. It's time for America to send a clear message to dangerous criminals that surprise attacks on police officers will be met with the full force of our justice system.

It's time for America to return, once again, to putting the safety of the public – and those who protect them – first. The heroes who've already died – and those who continue to put it on the line every day – deserve nothing less.

These unprovoked attempts to assassinate law enforcement officers must end.



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