BULLETS AND WOUNDS: LAWSUITS AGAINST THE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Policing is not an easy job to do. It is a noble and respected task with grand accountability and responsibility. Thus, police officers work under constant stress; face dangerous circumstances and attempt to resolve difficult life matters for their communities. Under constant and changing job environment, police officers exercise enormous discretions while dealing with pressure, stress, and hard split-second decisions. The reality of officer-involved shooting is one of those discretions in the life of police. Although the use of force by law enforcement officers happens on rare occasions, it puts an enormous strain on the police-community relations. However, the media scrutiny and public awareness have increased tremendously, and have resulted in a nationwide debate about race and policing, with the shootings happened in Ferguson, New York City, Baltimore, Sacramento, and numerous other places in recent years.

There is currently no national public database that tracks every officer-involved shooting in the United States. Furthermore, there are not many peer review scholarly studies done on the subject of lawsuits against police departments particularly in regards to officer-involved shootings. In fact, there is almost none. Using the data from Statistics Help Officer Training (SHOT) db, researchers will explore this uncharted topic. It should be noted that police shootings have been a subject in America for the last few years and there is no national data on this matter in the United States. Police departments are one of the heavy targets of the civil litigations. The awards being paid to settle some of those cases are beyond the imagination. SHOT db is an interdisciplinary project at Western Connecticut State University that aims to research where tax payer’s money is spent in the face of lawsuits on police use of force polices. Whether a shooting is justified or unjustified, plaintiffs go for the “deep pockets” which are the city governments. Tax money
should be going for things like public safety, better roads, and services for people who need them. This study aims to discover the legal ramifications of police shootings.

Hasan T. Arslan,
Associate Professor of Justice and Law Administration Division
Western Connecticut State University