

## **Cop Killers: A Perspective on the Mayerthorpe Mountie Murders**

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We will not forget Cst. Peter Schiemann, Reg. #48064, Cst. Leo Johnston, Reg. #48568, Cst. Tony Gordon, Reg. # 49673, Cst. Brock Myrol, Reg. # 51874

The tragic wave of violence against North America's law enforcement officers crashed into the year 2011 with 11 officers shot within a 24 hour time frame. When you look at the latest perpetrators whether it is Luis Enrique Monroy-Bracamonte (Sacramento, Ca), Christopher Dorner (Los Angeles, Ca), (James Roszko (Alberta, Canada), Maurice Clemmons, (Lakewood, Wa.), Johnny Simms (Miami, Fla.) or Hydra Lacy Jr. (St. Petersburg, Fla.), they have similar features. The violence toward law enforcement has been compiled and researched for years by Tony Pinizzotto & Ed Davis of the Behavioral Science Unit of the FBI in Quantico (Pinizzotto & Davis, 1992).

The year 2014 has again been another heart-breaking year for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with another three Mounties shot and killed in a single incident in Moncton, New Brunswick. I was again thrust back to the worst memories of my 28 year policing career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I would not want to detract from the tragedies in the United States by relating a historical Canadian case. I merely use this case to draw a parallel from my policing experience and to state clearly that it is the same types of personality that are killing our criminal justice family regardless of territorial boundary.

In general I believe that perpetrators of violence against law enforcement and other authority figures fit into one or more of the following categories:

- The Revenge Oriented Mind
- The Psychopathic Mind
- The Delusional Mind
- The Mind with Over-Valued Ideas

In this case presentation, the motivating mindset was revenge but the prominent personality was psychopathic. I will highlight the "Mind with Over-Valued Ideas" in another case presentation as the recent incident in my backyard (Ottawa, Ontario) has everyone ducking for cover and searching for answers.

Psychopathy is defined by a cluster of personality traits and behaviors, including grandiosity, egocentricity, deceptiveness, shallow emotions, lack of empathy or remorse, irresponsibility, impulsivity, and a tendency to ignore or violate social norms. Dr. Robert Hare, world authority in the study of psychopaths, characterizes them as "intraspecies predators who use charm,

manipulation, intimidation, and violence to control others and to satisfy their own selfish needs." He adds, "lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, psychopaths cold-bloodedly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret"(1996, p.26).

## **Mayerthorpe Case**

On the early afternoon of March 2, 2005 James Roszko fled his farm located in the rolling foothills of northwestern Alberta, nestled between cattle country and the prairie farming areas to the east. He left to avoid imminent arrest by authorities but sometime during the night or early on the morning of March 3<sup>rd</sup> Roszko stealth fully returned to his property and entered a Quonset hut where he had weapons cached. He waited until four RCMP Constables walked into the building and then commenced firing multiple .308 rounds, striking each one of them with multiple hits. A fifth Constable outside the building then observed Roszko exit the Quonset and noted that he had a long barrelled rifle slung over his shoulders (later found to be a stolen .300 Magnum calibre sporting rifle) and a Heckler and Koch .308 Caliber assault rifle in his hands across his chest. He also had a 9 MM Beretta semi-auto pistol in his waistband. Roszko turned towards him and fired two shots. One round struck the police vehicle the Constable was using for cover and the other narrowly missed him to his left, striking the rear view outside passenger side mirror of the police vehicle. The Constable fired two shots directly at Roszko who stumbled and then re-entered the Quonset. Later, members of the Emergency Response Team entered the Quonset and discovered the deceased bodies of the four Constables. Roszko's body was also located in the Quonset and it was subsequently determined, while two of the police rounds had struck his body, he died as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

James Roszko was a psychopath. My file review assessment on the PCL-R indicates that he was in the 91<sup>st</sup> percentile of offenders. The score on Factor 1 ("Selfish, callous and remorseless use of others") put Roszko in the top 1% of inmates. The score was clearly over the cut off score for psychopathy. The instrumental (planned, goal directed) nature of this violent act is clear. This was the showdown with police that Roszko had waited for and likely fantasized about for many years. This was the callous act that would avenge all of the wrongs done to him by police and now that they were on his farm there was a sense of entitlement to defend his property. The combination of psychopathy, antisocial traits, schizotypal traits, sexual deviance, paranoia, and a strong revenge orientation make this a very volatile and dangerous individual. Combining this callous, aggressive personality with a fascination for guns and a hatred of the police, you have a ticking bomb. The detonator, we now know, is the approach onto his property. The defence of his property was a "raison d'être" for Roszko and it is likely that he both fantasized and planned for the day (Logan, 2005. Roszko Psychological Autopsy).

## **How is what happened in 2005 relevant to us in 2015?**

The relevance is that almost 10 years later we are seeing the same personality type inflicting the same damage on the same people. No, it is not necessarily the big city gang member, the Hells Angels, or the Mafia that is killing our criminal justice officials. It is the psychopath in society. The psychopath might be a member of the Mafia, Hells Angels, or the Bloods but it is not the

gang affiliation that is the common factor, it is the psychopathic personality (Hare & Logan, 2007). Granted, not every psychopath is a murderer but it is often the psychopath with other behavioural and contextual factors (i.e. perceived loss, revenge orientation, increased negative contact with law enforcement) that creates a perfect storm and catches our people in the maelstrom.

Cop Killers have similar features. Similarities include previous violence, early violence, threat or aggression toward authority, perceived loss of freedom, previous use of weapons in violent acts, and personality disorder with psychopathic features. I know there have been predictions and discussions about gang violence and the risk it poses to law enforcement safety but in my opinion, it is the revenge oriented, nothing more to lose psychopath that will be our greatest nemesis.

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