

**Violence against Police:  
Felony Killings of South  
Carolina Police Officers from 1962  
to 1998  
And  
Assaults against South Carolina  
Police Officers in 1991 and 1997**

*Completed by Christopher T. Ford,  
Captain, United States Air Force  
Masters of Criminal Justice  
University of South Carolina  
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**ABSTRACT:** Felonious killings of and aggravated assaults against law enforcement officers reflect the dangerous nature of police work. In South Carolina 64 police officers were killed from 1962 to 1998 and nearly 500 were assaulted while in the line of duty in 1991 and 1997. These incidents were statistically analyzed using frequency tables and trend analysis to determine significant trends which may indicate new areas of training and research to prevent future officer injuries and deaths. Major findings are that many of the deaths occurred alone during routine traffic stops without the assistance or requested assistance of other officers. The most preferred weapons to complete an assault were hands and feet while the most preferred weapon used to feloniously kill a police officer was a firearm; specifically a handgun.

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*Completed by Christopher T. Ford  
A Masters Project on Behalf of  
South Carolina's State Law Enforcement Division  
February 2000*

**ABSTRACT:** Felonious killings of and aggravated assaults against law enforcement officers reflect the dangerous nature of police work. In South Carolina 64 police officers were killed from 1962 to 1998 and nearly 500 were assaulted while in the line of duty in 1991 and 1997. These incidents were statistically analyzed using frequency tables and trend analysis to determine significant trends which may indicate new areas of training and research to prevent future officer injuries and deaths. Major findings are that many of the deaths occurred alone during routine traffic stops without the assistance or requested assistance of other officers. The most preferred weapons to complete an assault were hands and feet while the most preferred weapon used to feloniously kill a police officer was a firearm; specifically a handgun.

The violence of our Nation's history has always been a source of fascination for the public. Assaults and homicides have made the headlines of nearly every newspaper at one time or another. When the victim of violence, homicide in particular, is a law enforcement officer, the news becomes even more in-depth and sensationalized. Whether these acts were simple assaults, aggravated assaults or ultimately homicides, they have been areas of continuous study (e.g. Sherman 1980).

With the invention and proliferation of firearms, gun-related homicides quickly took center stage. Gun-related crime within the United States reached an all-time high during the 1980s and early 1990s but began a gradual decline through 1997 (Sheppard, 1999). Unfortunately, today, homicide rates remain very high and firearms are still the chosen method for completing these crimes. In 1997 alone, firearms were used in 66% of all murders. Handguns, in particular, were involved in over half (Sheppard, 1999).

These same acts of aggression found in America's past are still very common today. For decades, researchers have documented the incidents of police officer deaths in attempts to find some type of typical profile of the victim officers (e.g. Wilbanks, 1996; Stillman, 1986). However, only a few researchers (e.g. Ford, & McCabe, 1999) have tried to examine the circumstances surrounding the incident itself or the offenders who committed the attack.

These two studies were compiled for dissemination to law enforcement agencies throughout South Carolina. They have one goal in common: to examine assaults against and felonious killing of police officers to better understand these incidents to reduce their frequency through the identification of training or policy improvements. It is with this result in mind that the following studies are presented.

### Causal Theories

Violent acts continue today with much concern specifically over gun violence throughout the United States. While crime rates may be on the decline across the nation as a whole, South Carolina's index crime rate, especially, the violent crime rate, remains constant (Office of Safety and Grants, 1997). Whether it's in a school or a place of business, citizens are finding few words to describe the acts making headlines on the evening news and CNN.

Guns are in the hands of everyone, from age 12 to 90, and the resistance to using them has seemed to disappear. Dr. Daniel Lockwood (1997) explored violence among our nation's teens and pre-teens only to explain the commonality of violence in these age groups not as a lack of values, but the presence of well-developed values. These values *include* violence as an acceptable form of expression when frustrated or confronted. The declines in our nation's murder rate as a whole since 1993 is not complimented by the same decline in homicides committed by juveniles and young adults which remain well above the levels seen in the 1980s (Fox, & Zawitz, 1999). It is then no wonder that the average age of cop killers in South Carolina has gradually decreased by over nine years from the 1960s to 1990s (Ford, & McCabe, 1999).

While Lockwood explains these incidents of increased gun-related violence with theories about the offenders' character or value system, others contend it is the environment that has shaped these offenders into killers. Cook (1998) describes the "Superpredator" theory which suggests that the youth of today are less fearful of violence and unrestrained in its use since they have grown up in a society dominated with violence on the streets, in the homes and even on television. Cook (1998) also notes that "moral poverty – children growing up without love, care, and guidance from responsible adults" has left today's young adults in a position to make their own rules. Cook (1998) contends that the entire increase in homicides from the 1980s to 1993

can be solely attributed to gun-related homicides since homicide rates for weapons other than guns remained constant during the same period. Why, then, would these young adults choose to shoot a police officer that is neither a peer nor a direct threat?

One explanation can be seen as early as the 1950s when investigators noted that when people are prevented from acting in a way that previously produced some rewarding outcome, they often become more aggressive (Berkowitz, 1962). It is reasonable to expect that, as implied in the frustration-induced theory of criminality, offenders who are prohibited from completing a previously lucrative criminal act, subsequently become violent. Police officers, who enforce the government's formal and informal control mechanisms, are in a position to be the target of such aggression. This aggression often goes beyond assault and escalates to aggravated assaults or even homicide.

Marx (1996) places some blame on officer interactions as well. "Escalation," as he terms it, is when a routine situation, usually not known to generate violent responses or tragic outcomes, such as a traffic stop, turns into a violent, and sometimes deadly, confrontation.

With these theories in mind, research was conducted to examine how national trends for felonious killings of and aggravated assaults against police officers compare and contrast to South Carolina's trends.

## Felonious Killings of Police Officers in South Carolina from 1962 to 1998

### Methods

The South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division's (SLED) Uniformed Crime Report (UCR) and National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) database was used as the primary source for this study. From 1962 to 1998, the data on the felonious killings of police officers were evaluated. Supplemental reports were obtained from the victim officer's agency for each case that identified a police officer as a victim of homicide. Drawing upon the information provided in these files and the accompanying narrative summaries, specific data regarding the deaths of police officers in South Carolina were compiled and examined. These data were statistically analyzed through the means of frequency tables and trend analysis to determine any significant trends, which may indicate new areas of training or research to prevent future officer deaths. It is important to note that only felonious killings were included in this data set.

### Results

#### Number of Officers Killed

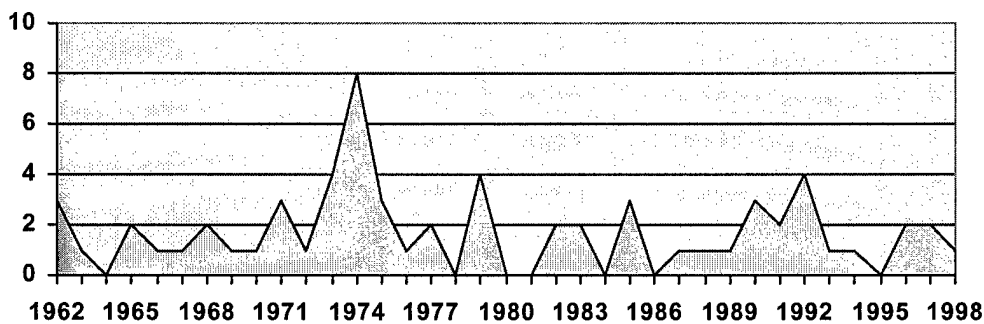
During the 37 year period, the SLED data revealed a total of 64 police officers feloniously killed in South Carolina at an almost constant average just under two per year. The only outlying exception to this trend was in 1974 (N=8), for which, no explanation can be given (See Figure 1). This finding is consistent with South Carolina homicides in general, which remained relatively constant. The United States as a whole, however, saw a dramatic decline in officer homicides from the high of 134 in 1973 to a low of 55 in 1996 (Maguire, K., & Pastore, A., 1998). South Carolina's consistency should not be surprising when compared with previous

research which has revealed that the South is the region where most police officers are killed, even when population/officer ratios are taken into consideration (Edwards, 1995).

### Day of Week

Of all the fatal attacks on police officers, nearly 43% occurred either on a Thursday or Friday (See Appendix A, Table A1). This finding is particularly interesting since it is in

■ Figure 1. Annual Felonious Police Officer Deaths



opposition with Edwards' (1995) research that noted Tuesday and Wednesday as being the most frequent day of attack. General summation of both these findings may indicate that the usual perceptions by police officers to be more cautious on the weekend may not be accurate. I hypothesize that the heightened awareness on weekends, due to *perceived* increased risks, results in a less-than-cautious attitude during weekday shifts.

### Month

Most of the fatal attacks on officers during this period occurred in September (12.5%) and May (10.9%). One possible explanation worthy of further study may be the effects of seasonal change on provoking violence as it appears these months are at the start and finish of summer in South Carolina. The lowest months of occurrence (N=4) were July, October, and December (See Appendix A, Table A1). Again, no single explanation can account for why these months were the lowest, but these findings are nearly identical to Edwards' (1995) findings of

July and December being the lowest months. Edwards (1995) hypothesized that these two months may be common vacation months for officers, thus reducing their vulnerability to attack by a general decrease in officer presence in this study. However, this explanation fails to account for the month of October, which would not logically appear to be a popular vacation month.

#### Type of Incident in Which Death Occurred

An alarming percentage of the incidents in which officers were killed were while performing routine traffic stops (24.1%). However, no officers during this period were killed during felony stops (See Appendix A, Table A1). This finding was more pronounced in Edwards' (1995) study which noted 62% of officers killed during all traffic stops, felonious and routine.

Similarly, Maguire and Pastore (1998) found less than 13% of all deaths occurring from 1987 to 1996 during traffic stops. Other researchers found conflicting results. Allen, Carlson, Lewis, and Mennle (1979) only found 9% matching that description.

Other circumstances surrounding these incidents include the officer working alone, with no request for assistance (38.1%), or measured another way, working as a one-man patrol in a vehicle (58.7%). Again, other studies indicate smaller, but significant, percentages (29.7%) of cases where officers were alone during their attack (Allen et al., 1979). While these findings are not so surprising, the fact that nearly half (41.3%) of the officers killed were assisted by, or assisting other officers, is very unsettling. I am concerned over the large number of officers killed even when supported by fellow officers. This could change common thoughts on "safety in numbers," unless, as I hypothesize, many of these situations were already known to be volatile and very risky for those involved, and therefore, more officers were dispatched to the incidents.

Unfortunately, it appears that the use of more officers did not significantly reduce the risk to at least one of the officers dispatched.

Another interesting result of this study was the extremely low number (5.6%) of deaths occurring during incidents of domestic violence, which have long been believed to be the most risky situations for officers (Sherman, 1992). Interpretation of the data does not explain this phenomena, but I hypothesized that training on the risks involved in responses to domestic violence over the past few decades have increased officer awareness to any risks and therefore, they proceed with more caution.

### Victim Demographics

#### Age.

The average age of the victim officers was 36.9 years with the oldest being 67 and the youngest 21 (See Appendix A, Table A2). This result are nearly identical to Edwards' (1995) where he also reported 36 years of age as the average. Of those killed during the studied period, 44% were 30 years old or younger, 26% were 31-40 years old and 30% were over 40 years old. When compared to Maguire and Pastore (1998), again, the percentages appear very similar. For example, they found 43.5% of the victim officers were 30 or younger.

What is interesting to note is how these percentages are not proportional to the state's current employment demographics. As of 1998, only 31% of all officers in South Carolina were in their 20s, 38% were in their 30s, and only 9% where in their 40s and 50s (LECO, 1998).

#### Sex.

In 1998, 87% of all officers in South Carolina were male. Yet, despite the fact that women represent a growing population of the law enforcement officer community, the victim officer's sex for all 64 cases during this period of study was male (See Appendix A, Table A2).

As Edwards (1995) puts it, “time and increased employment of female state patrol officers will most likely produce another unwanted ‘first,’ the first felonious killing of a female state patrol officer” (p. 96). I am afraid this ‘first’ is inevitable in South Carolina for all police officers. Even national data only report less than 4% of all officers killed from 1979 to 1996 were female (Maguire, & Pastore, 1998).

#### Race.

Census data from 1998 indicates 77% of all officers working in South Carolina were white. It is reasonable to assume the racial diversity of agencies throughout the state has gradually shifted from nearly all white to a mix of Caucasians, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics and others in recent decades. If that assumption holds true, then the finding that 83% of all the officers killed were Caucasians should not be too alarming (See Appendix A, Table A2). Averaging the percentage of Caucasian officers killed throughout the nation from 1979 to 1996, a similar result of 85.6% is found (Maguire, & Pastore, 1998).

#### Experience.

The average number of years of experience for those officers killed during the period of study was 8.3. Those officers with less than one year of experience made up 6.3% of all felonious deaths, and those with less than 10 years experience accounted for 66.6% (See Appendix A, Table A2). National statistics show officers with less than one year of experience made up 7% of the entire police population. LECO (1998) data show that 63% of the sworn officers in the state had less than 10 years of experience. These comparisons indicate the results appear to be consistent with a random distribution. Considering most officers with more than 10 years of experience are no longer in jobs requiring daily public contact (e.g. office jobs, senior management), this finding seems reasonable.

Uniform wear.

Officers killed in South Carolina were wearing their duty uniform 89.1% at the time of their attack (See Appendix A, Table A2). Compared to national data (92% in uniform), again, these findings are very similar (Maguire, & Pastore, 1998).

Offender DemographicsAge.

The average age of offenders was 33 years, with the youngest being 17 and the oldest 73 (See Appendix A, Table A3). The South Carolina and national percentages for the age breakdown can be found in Table 1. Evaluation of this table indicates the offenders in South Carolina, when compared to national data, are significantly older (over 40 age group). Table 1 also shows South Carolina had much fewer young offenders (those under 25). This finding appears to be in direct conflict with the "aging out" theories of criminality held common today (Siegel, 1998).

Table 1. Offender Age.

Age	South Carolina (1962 –1998)		National (1987 - 1996)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Under 18</b>	3	4.9%	111	12.3%
<b>18-24</b>	17	27.9%	328	36.3%
<b>25-30</b>	14	23.0%	183	20.2%
<b>31-40</b>	12	19.7%	164	18.1%
<b>Over 40</b>	15	24.6%	118	13.1%
<b>Total</b>	61		958	

\* National data from Maguire, & Pastore, 1998.

Sex.

It is also not surprising that most (91.9%) of the offenders in South Carolina were males (See Appendix A, Table A3), as well as throughout the United States (93%) (Maguire, & Pastore, 1998). Of the three female offenders involved in the deaths of South Carolina police officers, all were involved with males who were the primary subject.

Race.

Exactly half of the offenders during this period were African-Americans, with Caucasians being the next largest group at 44% (See Appendix A, Table A3). These percentages are in opposition to those found in national data which show 41% African-American and 51% Caucasian (Maguire, & Pastore, 1998).

Weapon used and proximity.

As of 1997, 47% of all murders throughout South Carolina were completed with a handgun and firearms, in general, for 68% (Office of Safety and Grants, 1997). When looking exclusively at felonious police officer deaths, those numbers rose greatly to 71.2% for handgun use and 88.2% for firearms in general (See Appendix A, Table A1). This finding is very similar to Allen et al. (1979) who found that 60% of all the officers killed in 1976 were killed by a handgun, with 85% killed by any type of firearm. The two most common caliber weapons used throughout this period were .38 (31.5%) and .22 (16.7%) at a distance of zero to five feet 61.1% of the time. It is also important to note that 17.5% of the officers killed were killed with their own service weapon (Again, See Appendix A, Table A1). This may be one of the few areas that law enforcement agencies have control over to prevent future loss of life.

Drug and alcohol use.

Drug and alcohol data for these offenders were so sparse that no conclusions could be drawn with any reliability (See Appendix A, Table A3).

Body Armor

The South Carolina Law Enforcement Census Office (1998) reported that while most departments (86%) in South Carolina provided body armor of some type to their officers, less than half (45%) required officers to wear this body armor while performing their duties. Of the

seven officers who were killed while wearing body armor, five had bullets circumvent the vest either through the armhole, neck hole or just below the vest in the abdomen (See Appendix A, Table A2).

Despite its introduction in 1981, 42% of all officers killed through 1996 were wearing some form of protective body armor (Maguire, & Pastore, 1998). This finding is surprising, but should not be the sole basis for officers choosing not to wear body armor when available. Reactive police management, was obvious when a top story in The Herald of Rock Hill, SC read “Troopers now must wear bulletproof vests” after one officer was killed while his vest sat in the trunk of his patrol car. It is important to emphasize that without first examining other research which depicts the number of officers saved from the use of body armor, drastic changes in body armor procurement and wear polices should not be made.

#### Research Obstacles

As Sherman (1980) notes, it is difficult to accurately research violence against police due to

...the absence of what social scientists call “baseline” data, or a set of denominators for which incidents of violence against police can be the numerators. We know how many police officers are killed during routine traffic enforcement each year, for example, but we do not know how many times police stop cars for traffic violations each year.

Without knowing the number of times police engage in certain types of activities - denominators - there is no way to compute the rate of attacks for each type of crime. (p.

8)

Even if we had baseline data to use as the denominator, the information surrounding the officer’s actions during the fatal incident may not be an accurate reflection of the actual events or the

efforts of the officer over the months before his or her death. Sherman (1980) notes how frequently any mistakes made by a slain officer quickly disappear to protect the dignity of the officer, the department, and his surviving family. It is not often that the actual incident details that are left out, since most of these details are used to train future officers. What is frequently lost is the officer's performance over their entire career, including initial training. Many instructors see young recruits who are all too eager to use force in training situations or find them a little too reactive or excitable during on the job training. Yet, most of these aggressive or abrupt characteristics are never documented. Other information surrounding the officer's off-duty life, community involvement, or financial and family pressures may all add value to determining important risk factors not previously recorded. The true injustice in this absence of complete data is the removal of some potentially valuable information for other officers who may benefit from reading reports about them.

Another problem with comparing research on these killings is the differences in operational definitions for variables by each researcher and the different groupings of these variables. Some researchers grouped felonious and accidental deaths into one category, making comparisons inaccurate. Other researchers grouped victim and offender ages, for example, in the 30s and some from 31-40. Developing a standard in presenting researching data of this nature would be very beneficial in determining future trends and areas for training emphasis.

The limited amount of cases to examine presents another threat to the conclusions drawn from this study. With only 64 cases to examine over the last 37 years, changes as little as one or two parameters per variable can significantly impact the results. In addition, the evolution of the Law Enforcement Officer Killed reports into more elaborate documents leaves early data sparse.

For example, data collected in the 1960s and 1970s did not include information concerning wear of a uniform, assistance of other officers and other data now considered invaluable to each case.

Finally, the UCR database in itself must be examined for its own reliability. It is uncertain, and very difficult to ascertain, if the data entered into the system represent original information only or if the data were updated as new and corrective information was later uncovered. Policy dictates that these updates are annotated into the system, but due to the enormous amounts of data entered into these files, it is difficult to track their accuracy.

### Conclusion

South Carolina has averaged just under two felonious police officer deaths annually over the last 37 years. A large proportion of these fatal attacks occurred on Thursdays or Fridays during the months of May and September. Many of these officers were conducting routine traffic stops alone, without requesting the assistance of other officers. In many other cases which did involve the assistance of other officers, the support did not prevent the death of at least one officer. The average victim officer was 37 years of age, with less than 10 years of experience in law enforcement. All of the victims were male and nearly all were in uniform at the time of death. The life-saving effect resultant from the use of bulletproof vests during the last 20 years of this period was not conclusive, due partially to its late introduction in 1981.

The offenders responsible for the killing of a police officer in South Carolina were, on average, 33 years of age, almost all males, and nearly an even distribution of Caucasians and African-Americans. Most frequently, these offenders used firearms, handguns in particular, with .38 and .22 caliber weapons at the top of the list. The majority of these attacks occurred at distances less than five feet with few offenders known to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Officers must be made aware that the use of terms like “typical” and “average” do not preclude these same fatal events from occurring to officers or by offenders not fitting into these “profiles.” Aggregate data must be used as a guide and tool to heighten awareness and caution, not put officers at ease during the “safe” times, days or incident types.

While this study attempted to make comparisons of South Carolina trends to those found throughout the nation, it left many areas unanswered, creating opportunities for future study. Some researchers claim it is inefficient training which caused these deaths (Brooks, 1975). Others say it was the surrounding social conditions, such as divorce or unemployment rates, which had the most influence (Lester, 1993). Regardless of the proposed cause, it is clear that officers must remain vigilant and alert to all sources of danger that could result in personal harm, no matter what the day, month, location, or offender’s demographics are.

## Assaults Against South Carolina Police Officers in 1991 and 1997

### Definition

For the purpose of this study, aggravated assaults were defined using the Office of Safety and Grants (1997) definition of “an unlawful attack for the purpose of inflicting serious bodily injury. This assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm” (p34). Hereafter, aggravated assault shall simply be stated as ‘assault.’

### Methods

The South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division’s (SLED) Uniformed Crime Report (UCR) and National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) database was used as the primary source for this study. Data from cases in 1991 and 1997 which identified police officers as victims of assaults were evaluated. When possible, supplemental reports were obtained from the victim officer’s agency to support the data found in the SLED database and to verify its accuracy. Drawing upon the information provided in these files and the accompanying narrative summaries, specific data regarding the assaults of police officers in South Carolina were compiled and examined. These data were statistically analyzed through the means of frequency tables and trend analysis to determine any significant trends which may indicate new areas of training or research to prevent future officer assaults.

### Findings

#### Number of Aggravated Assaults by Year

The number of assaults from 1991, 1994 (not completely analyzed in this study) and 1997 increased over this time period. In 1991, there were 227 incidents involving an assault against police officers, 1994 had 247 and 1997 had 251. This is nearly an 11% increase in just

seven years. This finding does not appear to be surprising since assaults against any person throughout the state during this period had a similar increase (Office of Safety and Grants, 1997). However, national data during the same seven-year period show a 21.8% decrease in these numbers (Maguire, & Pastore, 1999). A FBI study (1997) by Davis, Miller, and Pinizzotto showed the South as the region with the highest assaults against officer rate.

### Month

The most common months for assault were December (11.7%) and September (10.7%). Given a random distribution of attacks over a year, one would expect there to be about 8.3% of the assaults occurring each month. These results are not too far from a random distribution of assaults (See Appendix B. Table B1).

### Day of Week

A random distribution of attacks over a given week would be approximately 14.3% of the assaults occurring each day. In 1991 and 1997, South Carolina police officers were assaulted on Saturdays (19.9%) most often. All other days of the week were very similar to a random occurrence (See Appendix B. Table B1).

### Weapon

When examining the weapons involved in these assaults, only the most deadly was considered when more than one weapon was used by an offender or the offenders. From most serious to least, they were firearms, knives, vehicles, blunt instruments, hands/feet and all others. The vehicle category was the most difficult to place in this list considering their size and power. Nonetheless, hands/feet were the most common weapon used (33.1%). Firearms made the next largest category at 19.9% (See Appendix B. Table B1). Similarly, aggravated assaults against

any person in South Carolina during 1996 were completed with firearms (23.1%), but less frequently with hands/feet (16.7%) (Office of Safety and Grants, 1997).

Comparisons to national data from 1997 can be found in Table 2. Of special note is the large difference in the weapon of choice in South Carolina. Offenders in South Carolina appear to be more likely to use a firearm or knife and less likely to use their hands or feet than most offenders in the nation. Davis et al. (1997) found the primary reason an offender chose a particular firearm was due to his/her easy access to that particular weapon (69%).

Table 2. Weapon Used for Aggravated Assaults Against an Officer

Weapon	South Carolina (1991, 1997)		National (1997)		Seattle (1997)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Firearm	95	19.9	1844	3.8	13	2.6
Knife	38	7.9	895	1.8	9	1.8
Hands/feet	158	33.1	41023	83.5	465	91.5
Other	187	39.1	5389	11.0	21	4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>49151</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>100</b>

\* National data from Maguire, & Pastore, 1999 and Seattle data from [www.pan.ciseattle.wa.us/seattle/spd/overview](http://www.pan.ciseattle.wa.us/seattle/spd/overview).

### Location

The most common locations for an officer to be assaulted were highways and roadways (35.6%) and residences (33.9%) (See Appendix B, Table B1). These findings appear normal considering the large number of calls for service that are to these locations.

### Relationship between victims and offenders

Unlike aggravated assaults on any person in South Carolina in 1996, assaults against police officers were more commonly conducted by strangers than by acquaintances. Table 3 shows this comparison (See Appendix B, Table B1).

Table 3. Aggravated Assault Comparisons.

Relationship	Assaults against Officers in 1991 and 1997	Assaults against South Carolina citizens in 1996
Acquaintance	9.9%	53.4%
Family	0.9%	26.6%
Stranger	86.8%	16.1%
Unknown	2.4%	3.9%

\* 1996 data from Office of Safety and Grants, 1997.

### Victim Officer Characteristics

#### Sex.

Most of the police officers assaulted during 1991 and 1997 in South Carolina were males (92.0%). When compared to the law enforcement officer population demographics for South Carolina during 1997, we find that 85% were males (LECO, 1998). This finding is similar to a random distribution (See Appendix B. Table B2). The Davis et al. (1997) study had comparable results of 88% male victims.

#### Race.

Census data from 1998 indicates 77% of all officers working in South Carolina were white. It is reasonable to assume the racial diversity of agencies throughout the state has gradually shifted from nearly all white to a mix of Caucasians, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics and others in recent years. If that assumption holds true, the finding that just over 80% of the assaults were against Caucasian officers is not unexpected (See Appendix B. Table B2).

#### Age.

The average age of the victim officer was 31.8 years with the youngest being 21 and the oldest being 63 (See Appendix B. Table B2). Davis et al. (1997) had a similar result of an average age of 33 years during their study.

### Injuries.

Only the most life threatening or most serious injury was used when multiple injuries existed. A majority of cases (50.8%) involved no reported injuries while 24.4% reported only minor injuries (See Appendix B. Table B2).

### Alcohol or Drug Use.

It was not surprising that none of the victim officers were under the influence of a drug or controlled substance at the time of the attack. The same infrequency holds true for officers under the influence of alcohol during the assault. Only seven officers (all off-duty) were assaulted while under the influence of alcohol (See Appendix B. Table B2).

### Offender Characteristics

#### Sex.

As with most crime in the United States today, most of the assailants in this study were males (84.6%) (See Appendix B. Table B3). This finding was more pronounced in the Davis et al. (1997) study which found 93% of the offenders were male.

#### Race.

Over half of the offenders involved in assaults against a South Carolina police officer were African-American (59.8%) (See Appendix B. Table B3). Compared to census data from 1990, which shows African-Americans make up only 29.8% of the population, this finding seems very high (Pender, 1997). Davis et al. (1997) had identical results (59% African-American).

Age.

The average age of the offenders during this period of study was 28.4 years with the youngest being 12 and the oldest 81 (See Appendix B. Table B3). Again, Davis et al. (1997) had nearly identical results of 27 years of age as their average.

Arrest.

Of all the offenders in this studied period, 61.6% were arrested for their assault (See Appendix B. Table B3). Federal Bureau of Investigation (1986) findings show non- whites arrested for aggravated assault from 1981 – 1985 at a rate four times greater than whites. However, a very encouraging finding of this study was the apparent lack of racial bias in the determination of making an arrest during the period studied. Table 4 shows these results.

Table 4. Racial influence on arrest determination.

<b>Race of Offender and Victim</b>	<b>Arrest made</b>	<b>All occurrences of this demographic</b>
<b>Black Offender on White Officer</b>	47.3%	45.7%
<b>Black Offender on Black Officer</b>	12.8%	13.3%
<b>White Offender on Black Officer</b>	3.5%	5.1%
<b>White Offender on White Officer</b>	35.5%	34.7%

Alcohol or Drug Use.

Very few offenders were found to be under the influence of a controlled substance (5.5%) while 36.7% were known to be under the influence of alcohol at the time of the assault (See Appendix B. Table B3).

Additional Offenses.

When examining additional offences placed against the assailant, only the most serious offense was considered, using violent index crimes as the default, when multiple charges were placed. The most frequent additional offense placed against the offender was simple assault

(10.5%). Most offenders were not charged with another offense (69.3%) (See Appendix B. Table B3).

### Research Obstacles

Many of the same obstacles found in the first study are prevalent in the second. These include a lack of a control group, the absence of baseline data (e.g. how many calls for service were there in 1991 to a home?), and the accuracy of UCR databases after updates and new information become available. The only obstacle that is not present in this study which was present in the first was the limiting size of the victim officer population. There was almost ten times the number of cases available to research just in two years; leaving the law of large numbers to correct for most outlying and unique variable parameters.

### Conclusions

South Carolina averaged 239 incidents involving an aggravated assault against a police officer in 1991 and 1997. A large proportion of these non-fatal attacks occurred during the months of December and September. Many of these officers were assaulted on highways and roadways or at a residence. The average victim officer was 31.8 years of age. Most of the victims were male (92%).

The offenders responsible for the aggravated assault against a police officer in South Carolina were, on average, 28 years of age, almost all males, and predominately African-Americans. Most frequently, these offenders used hands or feet to attack the officer. Still, a large number used firearms, handguns in particular, vehicles, and blunt objects. Only a few of the victims were under the influence of alcohol (off-duty police officers). Over a third of the offenders were known to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

## Recommendations

Comparing these two studies yielded many interesting results. While the findings presented in this study in no way offer complete methods for ensuring officer safety, they raise levels of awareness and encourage discussions on how to modify training programs to increase the likelihood of survival.

Departments have the greatest chance of reducing violence against police by reviewing and updating their policies and procedures. Training officers, managers, supervisors and officers at all levels must closely examine their department's policies and procedures to ensure they clearly address proper officer response to most situations. Once clearly written with officer survival in mind, these policies and procedures must be widely distributed and subsequently emphasized to ensure they are strictly followed. Reviewing and writing clear standard operating procedures (SOPs), then conducting recurring training on these SOPs could significantly reduce deaths and injuries resulting from procedural errors. Agencies cannot control the offender's actions but can control their officer's actions through proper guidance and repetitive training.

Another area that offers promise in affecting the outcome of these aggravated assaults and felonious deaths is technology. Smart guns, or guns that can only be fired by a specific officer wearing a magnetic ring, have been around for years, but their integration into law enforcement has been very slow. If available and used during the period of study, 17% of the felonious deaths may not have occurred. These cases were all incidents in which the officer was killed with his own weapon. It is not too far fetched to explore the use of leading technologies such as those being developed which can "sense" when the officer is in front of the weapon instead of the one behind it shooting the firearm by the use of an electronic signature. While

today these technologies sound farfetched and are currently very costly, they warrant further examination as to their benefits in preventing future deaths.

Communications technology is the last area of focus in preventing officer harm. The use of GPS systems integrated into not only vehicles, but into mobile radios as well, allow dispatchers and fellow officers to track the movements of officers. No longer is the officer alone conducting a traffic stop. Systems like the ALERT systems being tested by the Texas Department of Transportation offer real time video and mapping from the patrol officer's vehicle. His/her location is relayed in real time to not only the dispatcher, but to any other pre-designated officer's patrol car. Up to four video images can be sent to show the surrounding location of the patrol vehicle, a wide angle view of the suspect's vehicle, a zoom video of the suspect vehicle's license tag, and even a view of the patrol officer's back seat (For more information on ALERT, see NIJ Journal, January 1999). The major resistance to GPS has come from the officers themselves. Most fear being "tracked" during their tour of duty.

Similar resistance can be seen when examining body armor use/non-use. Officers rarely fail to describe the risks of their job, yet, many chose to leave devices that can reduce those risks, like body armor, in the trunk of their patrol car. GPS and real time video systems need to come off the market shelf and into the officer's vehicle.

Lastly, it is important to reiterate the Davis et al. (1997) finding that two behavioral descriptors are common to both assaulted and feloniously killed officers. They were labeled as "not following all the rules, especially in regard to arrests, traffic stops, and calling for or waiting for backup" and as "feeling he/she can 'read' others/situations and will drop guard as a result." These two labels, when used to describe an officer, must be taken very seriously as detrimental attributes and must be quickly corrected through training and documentation.

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Appendix A: Situational Circumstances Surrounding  
South Carolina Police Officer Deaths from 1962 to 1998

Table A1. Situational Circumstances.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Situation in which death occurred		
Non-felony traffic stop/pursuit	13	24.1
Investigating suspicious persons	8	14.8
Drug related activity (busts, buys)	6	11.1
Robbery in progress or pursuit of	4	7.4
Handling, transporting prisoners	4	7.4
Disturbance Call (fights)	3	5.6
Ambush (entrapment or premeditation)	3	5.6
Domestic disturbance	3	5.6
Ambush (unprovoked attack)	2	3.7
Handling mentally deranged persons	2	3.7
Burglary in progress or pursuit of	1	1.9
Unknown	5	9.3
Unidentified	10	
Was Victim Officer killed with own weapon?		
Yes	11	17.5
No	50	79.4
Unknown	2	3.2
Unidentified	1	
Type of Assignment		
One-man vehicle	37	58.7
Two-man vehicle	15	23.8
Special Assignment*	4	6.3
Foot Patrol	2	3.2
Off duty	2	3.2
Detective	1	1.6
Other	2	3.2
Unidentified	1	
*Example: serving warrants		
Involvement of Other Officers		
Assisted by, or assisting other officers	26	41.3
Alone, no assistance requested	24	38.1
Alone, assistance requested	13	20.6
Unidentified	1	

Month of attack		
January	5	7.8
February	6	9.4
March	5	7.8
April	5	7.8
May	7	10.9
June	5	7.8
July	4	6.3
August	5	7.8
September	8	12.5
October	4	6.3
November	6	9.4
December	4	6.3
Day of Week		
Monday	9	14.3
Tuesday	5	7.9
Wednesday	4	6.3
Thursday	14	22.2
Friday	13	20.6
Saturday	10	15.9
Sunday	8	12.7
Location of attack		
Government/Public (e.g. roadways)	31	60.8
Residential	12	23.5
Commercial	7	13.7
Unknown	1	2.0
Unidentified	13	
Distance between offender and victim officer (feet)		
0-5	33	61.1
6-10	15	27.8
11-20	3	5.6
21-50	1	1.9
Over 50	1	1.9
Unknown	1	1.9
Unidentified	10	
Weapon used to kill officer		
Handgun	42	71.2
Shotgun	7	11.9
Rifle	3	5.1
Knife or cutting instrument	2	3.4
Vehicle	2	3.4
Hands, feet	1	1.7

Multiple	1	1.7
Other	1	1.7
Unidentified	5	
Caliber used to kill victim officer		
.22	9	16.7
.25	1	1.9
.30	1	1.9
.32	2	3.7
.357	6	11.1
.38	17	31.5
.380	1	1.9
.45 (blk powder)	1	1.9
9 mm	6	11.1
12 gauge	5	9.3
16 gauge	2	3.7
Multiple	1	1.9
Unknown	2	3.7
Unidentified	10	

Table A2. Victim Officer Characteristics

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Victim Officer's Agency Type		
Police Dept	25	39.1
Sheriff Office	25	39.1
Highway Patrol	13	20.3
Dept of Public Safety	1	1.6
Rank		
Patrolman	17	28.8
Deputy Sheriff	16	27.1
Sergeant	6	10.2
Corporal	2	3.4
Lieutenant	2	3.4
Captain	1	1.7
Major	1	1.7
Assistant Chief	1	1.7
Chief	3	5.1
Other	10	16.9
Unidentified	5	
Total Years of Experience		
Less than 10	42	66.7

	10 - 19	15	23.8
	20 - 28	6	9.5
	Unidentified	1	
Age			
	20 - 29	23	42.6
	30 - 39	13	24.1
	40 - 49	9	16.7
	50 and over	10	18.5
	Unidentified	10	
Sex			
	Male	64	100.0
	Female	0	0
Race			
	Caucasian	45	83.3
	African American	9	16.7
	Native American/Alaskan Eskimo	0	0
	Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0
	Unidentified	10	
Was victim officer wearing body armor?			
	No	25	75.8
	Yes	7	21.2
	Unknown	1	3.0
	Unidentified	31	
Was victim officer in uniform?			
	No	5	10.9
	Yes	41	89.1
	Unidentified	18	

Table A3. Offender Characteristics

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Sex		
	Male	79
	Female	3
	Unknown	4
Age		
	Under 20	6

20 – 29	25	40.1
30 – 39	14	29.9
40 – 49	8	13.1
50 and over	8	13.1
Unidentified	3	
Race		
Caucasian	37	44.0
African American	42	50.0
Native American/Eskimo	1	1.2
Unknown	4	4.8
Unidentified	2	
Number of Subjects		
1	32	51.6
2	10	16.1
3	10	16.1
4	1	1.6
5	1	1.6
Unknown	8	12.9
Unidentified	2	
Was offender under the influence of a controlled substance?		
Yes	1	1.2
No	13	15.5
Unknown	70	83.3
Unidentified	2	
Was the offender under the influence of or intoxicated by alcohol?		
Yes	15	17.9
No	17	20.2
Unknown	52	61.9
Unidentified	2	

Appendix B: Situation Circumstances Surrounding Assaults against Police Officers  
in South Carolina in 1991 and 1997

Table B1. Situational Circumstances.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Month of attack		
January	39	8.2
February	28	5.9
March	36	7.5
April	43	9.0
May	36	7.5
June	34	7.1
July	39	8.2
August	40	8.4
September	51	10.7
October	34	7.1
November	42	8.8
December	56	11.7
Day of Week		
Monday	65	14.4
Tuesday	70	14.6
Wednesday	51	10.7
Thursday	65	13.6
Friday	69	14.4
Saturday	95	19.9
Sunday	63	13.2
Weapon		
Hands/feet	158	33.1
Firearm	95	19.9
Handgun	55	11.5
Shotgun	19	4.0
Rifle	11	2.3
Other gun, Unknown gun	10	2.1
Blunt object	77	16.1
Vehicle	74	15.5
Other	28	5.6
None	5	1.0
Unknown	2	0.4

## Time (24-hour clock)

1	35	7.3
2	25	5.2
3	14	2.9
4	6	1.3
5	7	1.5
6	3	0.6
7	7	1.5
8	4	0.8
9	8	1.7
10	7	1.5
11	12	2.5
12	12	2.5
13	17	3.6
14	11	2.3
15	16	3.4
16	20	4.2
17	18	3.8
18	31	6.5
19	19	4.0
20	40	8.4
21	49	10.3
22	28	5.9
23	34	7.1
24/00	56	11.7

## Location

Residential (e.g. apartment, home)	162	33.9
Residential parking areas	6	1.3
Commercial (e.g. bar, convenient store)	39	8.2
Commercial parking areas	29	6.1
School or school grounds	10	2.1
Highways and roadways	170	35.6
Government facility or grounds	9	1.9
Jail	33	6.9
Other	11	2.3

## Relationship

Acquaintance, friend	69	9.9
Family or common law	6	0.9
Stranger	607	86.8
Unknown	17	2.4
Unidentified	10	

Table B2. Victim Officer's Characteristics.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	565	92.0
Female	49	8.0
<b>Age</b>		
Under 20	1	0.2
20 – 29	294	48.0
30 – 39	212	34.6
40 – 49	77	12.6
50 and over	22	3.6
Unknown	6	1.0
Unidentified	2	
<b>Race</b>		
Caucasian	493	80.3
African American	115	18.7
Native American/Eskimo	2	0.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.2
Unknown	3	0.5
<b>Injuries</b>		
Unconsciousness	1	0.2
Possible Internal Injury	10	1.6
Apparent Broken Bones	20	3.3
Other Major Injury	77	12.5
Severe Laceration	40	6.5
Loss of Teeth	4	0.7
Minor Injury	150	24.4
None	312	50.8
<b>Alcohol or Drug Use</b>		
Under influence of controlled substance	0	0.0
Under influence of alcohol	7	1.5
No influence	468	98.5

Table B3. Offender's Characteristics.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	495	84.6
Female	87	14.9
Unknown	3	0.5
<b>Age</b>		
Under 20	123	21.1
20 – 29	225	38.7
30 – 39	135	23.2
40 – 49	58	10.0
50 and over	25	4.3
Unknown	16	2.7
Unidentified	3	
<b>Race</b>		
Caucasian	232	39.6
African American	350	59.8
Unknown	3	0.5
<b>Arrested</b>		
Yes	360	61.6
No	222	38.0
Unknown	2	0.3
Unidentified	1	
<b>Alcohol or Drug Use</b>		
Under influence of a controlled substance	26	5.5
Under the influence of alcohol	175	36.7
No influence	274	57.7
Unidentified	110	
<b>Additional Offenses</b>		
None	329	69.3
Simple Assault	50	10.5
Drug charges	26	5.5
Vandalism	16	3.4
Shoplifting	10	2.1
Unidentified	110	