**Definition:**

Suicide-by-cop (SbC): A colloquial term used to describe a suicidal incident whereby the suicidal subject, with intent to die and understanding the finality of the act engages in a consciously, life-threatening behavior to the degree that it compels a police officer to respond with deadly force.

**Facts:**

- Often occurs because the individual has the intent to die, but doesn’t want to kill him/herself.
- There are two victims of SbC: the suicidal subject, and the firing officer. Officers involved in SbC often suffer from emotional difficulties, and sometimes Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), following the incident.
- When facing an armed individual, officers often do not know if the individual’s firearm is loaded or not, and must defend themselves in case it is.
- A study using data from 1998 to 2006, found that among 707 officer involved shootings, 36% were attempted/completed suicide by cop; 51% of subjects were killed.

**Profile of SbC Subjects:**

1. 95% were male, 5% female
2. Mean age: 35 for men, 40 for women
3. 41% men were Caucasian, 26% Hispanic and 16% African American
4. 50% women were Caucasian, 25% Hispanic
5. 37% of men, 42% of women were single
6. 29% of men, 50% of women had children
7. 54% of men were unemployed
8. 29% of men did not have housing
9. 62% of men, 100% of women had confirmed or probable mental health history
10. 80% of men were armed – of these 60% possessed a firearm, (86% loaded), 26% possessed knives
11. 100% of women were armed – 50% had a firearm, (33% loaded), 50% had a knife
12. 19% feigned or simulated weapon possession
13. 87% of individuals made suicidal communications prior and/or during the incident
14. 36% were under the influence of alcohol

**Typology:**

- Direct Confrontation - 16% The individual pre-plans an attack on law enforcement, in order to be killed by them. These include:
  1. Kamikaze attack – subject attacks police station or officers using deadly force
  2. Controlled attack – subject confronts police with a real or threatened weapon
  3. Manipulated confrontation – subject orchestrates a situation to initiate police investigation
  4. Dangerous confrontation – subject creates a situation (such as committing a crime) to attract police
Typology (cont.):

- Disturbed Intervention – 20% The subject acts in an emotionally disturbed manner that calls for police intervention, without evidence that he wanted to involve police.
  These include:
  1. Suicide intervention – the subject is attempting suicide and threatens the police trying to prevent them
  2. Disturbed domestic – a domestic dispute leads to police intervention and a hopeless individual chooses death over arrest
  3. Disturbed person – an individual under the influence, or who is mentally ill resists police intervention preferring death over submission.

- Criminal Intervention: Criminal, who believes there is no way out, prefers death to being arrested

References:

i Stincelli, R. retrieved from: www.suicidebycop.com

ii Caruso, K. ‘Suicide by Cop’ retrieved from: http://www.suicide.org/suicide-by-cop.html


Further References:


