




Terror by Night: Who Pays the Price for Botched SWAT Team Raids? We Do.

Sometimes ten seconds is all the warning you get. 

John Whitehead

Sometimes you don't get a warning before all hell breaks loose.

Imagine it, if you will: It's the middle of the night. Your neighborhood is in darkness. Your household is asleep. Suddenly, you're awakened by a loud noise.

Barely *ten seconds later*, someone or an army of someones has crashed through your front door.

The intruders are in your home.

Desperate to protect yourself and your loved ones from whatever threat has invaded your home, you scramble to lay hold of something—anything—that you might use in self-defense. It might be a flashlight, a baseball bat, or that licensed and registered gun you thought you'd never need.

Shadowy figures appear at the doorway, screaming orders, threatening violence, launching flash bang grenades.

Chaos reigns.

You stand frozen, your hands gripping whatever means of self-defense you could find.

Just that simple act—of standing frozen in fear and self-defense—is enough to spell your doom.

The assailants open fire, sending a hail of bullets in your direction.

In your final moments, you get a good look at your assassins: it's the police.

Brace yourself, because this hair-raising, heart-pounding, jarring account of a SWAT team raid is what passes for court-sanctioned policing in America today, and it could happen to any one of us or our loved ones.

Nationwide, SWAT teams routinely invade homes, break down doors, kill family pets ([they always shoot the dogs first](#)), damage furnishings, terrorize families, and wound or kill those unlucky enough to be present during a raid.

No longer reserved exclusively for deadly situations, SWAT teams are now increasingly being deployed for relatively routine police matters such as serving a search warrant.

There are [few communities without a SWAT team](#) today, with [more than 80,000 SWAT team raids carried out per year](#), often for routine law enforcement tasks.

SWAT teams have been employed to address an astonishingly trivial array of so-called criminal activity or mere community nuisances: angry dogs, [domestic disputes](#), [improper paperwork filed by an orchid farmer](#), and [misdemeanor marijuana possession](#), to give a brief sampling.

Police have also raided homes on the basis of mistaking the presence or scent of legal substances for drugs. Incredibly, these substances have included tomatoes, sunflowers, fish, elderberry bushes, kenaf plants, hibiscus, and ragweed. In some instances, SWAT teams are even employed, in full armament, to perform [routine patrols](#).

These raids, which might be more aptly referred to as ["knock-and-shoot" policing](#), have become a thinly



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veiled, court-sanctioned means of giving heavily armed police the green light to crash through doors in the middle of the night.

No-knock raids, a subset of the violent, terror-inducing raids carried out by police SWAT teams on unsuspecting households, differ in one significant respect: they are carried out without police even having to announce themselves.

Warning or not, to the unsuspecting homeowner, there is no way of distinguishing between a home invasion by criminals as opposed to a police mob.

While the Fourth Amendment requires that police obtain a warrant based on probable cause before they can enter one's home, search and seize one's property, or violate one's privacy, SWAT teams are granted "no-knock" warrants at high rates such that the warrants themselves are rendered practically meaningless.

In addition to the terror brought on by these raids, general incompetence, collateral damage (fatalities, property damage, etc.) and botched raids are also characteristic of these SWAT team raids.

That appeared to be the case in Ohio, when a botched SWAT team raid in pursuit of stolen guns at a home where the suspects no longer resided resulted in [a 17-month-old baby with a heart defect and a breathing disorder ending up in the ICU](#) with burns around the eyes, chest and neck. In that Jan. 10, 2024, incident, [police waited all of six seconds after knocking on the door before using a battering ram to break in](#) and simultaneously launch two flash-bang grenades into the home. The baby's mother, having lived in the house for a week, barely had time to approach the door before she was grabbed at gunpoint, handcuffed and hustled outside. Only later did police allow her to enter the home to check on the baby, who had been hooked up to a ventilator near the window that police shattered before deploying the flash grenades.

The horror stories have become legion in which homeowners are injured or [killed simply because they mistook a SWAT team raid by police for a home invasion](#) by criminals.

All too often, botched SWAT team raids have resulted in one tragedy after another for those targeted with little consequences for law enforcement.

These incidents underscore a dangerous mindset in which the citizenry not only have less rights than militarized police, but also one in which the safety of the citizenry is treated as a lower priority than the safety of their police counterparts.

Yet it wasn't always this way.

There was a time in America when a person's home was a sanctuary, safe and secure from the threat of invasion by government agents, who were held at bay by the dictates of the Fourth Amendment, which protects American citizens from unreasonable searches and seizures.

The Fourth Amendment, in turn, was added to the U.S. Constitution by colonists still smarting from the abuses they had been forced to endure while under British rule, among these home invasions by the military under the guise of "writs of assistance." These writs gave British soldiers blanket authority to raid homes, damage property and wreak havoc for any reason whatsoever, without any expectation of probable cause.

We have come full circle to a time before the American Revolution when government agents—with the blessing of the courts—could force their way into a citizen's home, with seemingly little concern for lives lost and property damaged in the process.



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Given President Biden's determination to [expand law enforcement and so-called crime prevention at taxpayer expense](#), our privacy, property and security may be in even greater danger from government intrusion.

Be warned: as I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), the American police state has become a powder keg waiting for a lit match.

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