Since 1945 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has compiled statistics regarding the killing of police officers. In the 1970s the FBI began publishing the data annually in *Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted*. These reports contain both a descriptive account of each instance where a police officer was killed, as well as aggregate data regarding all officers slain in a particular calendar year. These reports, acknowledged by most researchers as the most exhaustive and accurate data on police killings, serve as the basis for general academic research on police killings (Little, 1984), specific articles on training programs (O’Neill, 1979), and various analyses of problems, trends, and patterns (Bartlett, 1988; Uchida & Brooks, 1988; Vaughn & Kappeler, 1986; Sherman et al., 1989; Wilbanks, 1994). Indeed, the FBI recently engaged in a unique study of select killings of police officers, using its own data, in an attempt to answer many of the questions left unanswered by the “raw data” of the annual reports (Department of Justice, 1992b).

Over the past two decades, other police scholars, drawing largely upon the data in these FBI annual reports, have engaged in various research on the felonious killings of police officers in the United States (Chapman, 1986; Konstantin, 1984; Swanton, 1985), again, attempting to answer many critical questions unaddressed by the FBI statistics. Most of these efforts focused on the characteristics of the slain officers and their assailants such as race (Fyfe, 1981; Konstantin, 1984;), the demographics of the event (e.g. day of week, month, time, etc.), type of weapon involved, or nature of call (Bard, 1970). Unfortunately, the vast majority of the research involved very little comparison or evaluation of deaths by type of agency or officer. Few studies have focused on the felonious killing of police officers in particular agencies: Albuquerque, (Heller et al., 1974); Baltimore County, (Uchida & Brooks, 1988); California,
Although some research involved data on a national level (Cardarelli, 1968; Lester, 1978) no research, to date, has evaluated the felonious killing of police officers by specific type of agency (e.g. local, sheriff, or state), using national data.

Similarly, very little literature addresses state police organizations (See, Bartlett, 1988; Edwards, 1993) even though they account for approximately nine percent of the sworn officers in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994). Furthermore, 12 of the 45 largest law enforcement agencies, in terms of number of sworn officers, are state police organizations (Department of Justice, 1994). Yet, despite these impressive numbers, very little research focuses specifically on state police organizations.

Accordingly, this research note evaluates the felonious killings of state police officers in descriptive and comparative terms, using the statistics from the FBI annual reports. For the period 1985-1992, the data regarding the felonious killings of state police officers were analyzed and certain trends, patterns, and characteristics of these killings were identified and compared to similar data for non-state police officer deaths.

**METHODS**

The FBI annual reports entitled *Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted* serve as the source of data for this study. These descriptive and analytical reports are compiled from information from three sources: 1) the law enforcement agency incurring the death, 2) FBI field offices, and 3) the Bureau of Justice Assistance (FBI, 1993). Each annual report contains a wealth of data and information, both individual and aggregate, relating to each felonious killing of a police officer in the United States, in U.S. territories, and for U.S. law enforcement personnel killed overseas. Additionally, the reports contain information regarding assaults of police officers.

For the eight-year period 1985-1992, the data on the felonious killings of law enforcement officers were evaluated, using the eight annual reports published by the FBI. For each annual report, the incidents involving the deaths of law enforcement officers from state police organizations were identified in both the narrative and statistical sections. The data for state police officers could be isolated, for a variety of
characteristics and/or circumstances (e.g. day of week, time, month, weapons, etc.), using the narrative accounts of each of the incidents. Drawing upon the information provided in the summaries and in various tables, specific data regarding the deaths of state police officers were compiled. For each characteristic or circumstance for which data was available for the state police officers, the annual totals were calculated. The annual totals for state police officers could then be subtracted from the annual totals for all sworn officers, creating a data set for non-state police officers. At least for some characteristics, the data set for state police officer deaths could then be evaluated and compared to the data set for non-state police officers.

**FINDINGS**

*Number of Officers Killed*

For the period 1985-1992, the FBI annual reports reveal a total of 561 law enforcement officers were feloniously killed. Of this number, 42 (7.2%) were state police officers. For 1992, of the 562,583 sworn officers in the United States, state police agencies employed some 52,980 sworn officers, or approximately nine percent of the total (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994). Proportionally, then, state police officers were feloniously killed in nearly the same percentage, relative to the total number of officers, as were non-state police officers. A slight difference is noted between the two groups in terms of the relative frequency of being feloniously killed. This number was computed by dividing the average number of sworn officers in each group employed each year by the average number of officers in each group killed each year. For non-state police officers the frequency is approximately one in 7,000 while for state police officers the frequency is approximately one in 10,000.

The number of state police officers killed each year ranged from a high of nine (1985) to a low of two (1990), with the period 1987-1990 evidencing a steady decline in the number of officers killed. However, the number increased to seven in 1991 (See Table 1). This decrease in the number of state police officers feloniously killed parallels the overall national decrease in the number of police officers feloniously killed during this period.
Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>State Police Officers Killed: By State (1985 - 1992)</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>West Virginia</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Source:** Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (1985-1992)

**Location**

As indicated in Table 1, the 42 slain state police officers were employed by 23 different states. In only two instances did a single agency lose more than one officer in a single year; the Missouri Highway Patrol lost two officers in 1985. The greatest loss for any one state in any one year, three officers, was experienced by the North Carolina Highway Patrol in 1985. Three states, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, each lost a total of four officers during the 1985-1992 period.

When evaluating the incidents by region, state police officer deaths occur consistent with the regional figures for non-state police officers. As previous research has revealed (FBI, 1992), the South is, by
far, the region where most police officers are killed. This pattern holds true when comparing state police officers to non-state police officers. This disproportionate rate holds true even when considering the number of officers in the south, the number of homicides in the South, and the population of the south (FBI, 1992). The most noticeable difference between the two groups, by region, is that a greater percentage of state police officers are killed in the South (57%) compared to non-state police officer deaths (48%). Within the South region, for the 1985-1992 period, four states (Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia) account for nearly one-third (N=13, 31%) of all state police officer deaths.

Circumstances

Time of Day: Both state police and non-state police, are killed most often between 4:00 p.m. and midnight. However, one difference noted is that a greater percentage of state police officers (57%) were killed during this time period than were non-state police officers (47%). Given that traffic/patrol assignments account for the greatest number of state police deaths, one possible hypothesis offered in explanation for this difference in percentage, along with other differences discussed in the following sections, is the nature of most state police assignments – one officer units with back-up units often miles away, or unavailable altogether.

Day of Week: For the period 1985-1992, most state police officer deaths occurred on Tuesday (21%), while most non-state police officer deaths (19%) occurred on Wednesday. For both groups it should be noted that greatest percentage of deaths occur during the middle of the week, rather than on the weekend, as conventional wisdom suggests. In fact, for state police officers, the second lowest percentage of deaths occurred on Saturday (12%) and for non-state police officers the lowest percentage actually occurred on Sunday (10%).

To some degree, these numbers may be explained by the “safe” approach officers may take when “working weekends.” That is, officers may approach weekend assignments cautiously, as the calls they perceive with the highest risk (domestic calls, drunks, fights, etc.) occur then. Accordingly, they then “play it safe” and respond to calls with greater caution. This conservative approach may very well be the “edge” keeping the deaths low during the period officers perceive as having the greatest number of “high risk” calls. Conversely, an officer making a “routine” traffic stop (note, traffic stops pose the singular circumstance where most
felonious killings of state police officers occur) on a Tuesday or Wednesday may not approach the incident seriously. That officer may be caught off guard and become the victim of a shooting before he or she even identifies the threat being confronted. Another explanation may simply be that more state police officers work on week-ends than during the week (Michigan State Police, 1993:19). Only further research will clarify and/or explain these patterns.

**Month:** January proved to be the month accounting for most non-state police officer deaths (11%), while April was the month most state police officers were feloniously killed (17%). For non-state police officers, October (6%) proved to be the month with the lowest percentage of deaths, while for state police officers, July and December (2%) tied for the lowest percentage. One interesting pattern identified was the range of percentages from month to month. The percentages of feloniously killings of non-state police officers, by month, ranged from six percent to 11 percent, relatively little variation by month. State police officer deaths, on the other hand, ranged from a low of two percent to a high of 17 percent. This variation for state police officers may be accounted for by the relatively few numbers of state police officers involved in this study. Further research, however, is needed to explore this question and other questions, such as why months as different as July and December could tie for the low months, and why state police officer deaths vary more by month than do non-state police officer deaths. A possible hypothesis is that July and December are the low months because fewer officers are working; that is when most officers take vacations. This hypothesis is not, however, supported by the data for non-state police officer deaths, where October is the month with the fewest deaths, without any indication that October is a “vacation” month for non-state police officers.

**Activity of Officer-Victims:** For each officer feloniously killed, the FBI classifies the activity of the officer-victim at the time of death into one of eight broad categories. This research revealed, as mentioned earlier, that most state police officers are killed while engaged in traffic stops (N=26, 62%) while most non-state police officers are killed while making arrests (N=202, 39%). These numbers, again, are consistent with the nature of state police officers’ assignments, which are primarily traffic or patrol.

Of the 26 state police officers killed while engaged in traffic stops, eight were killed while conducting “routine” stops for speeding. Furthermore, of the 26 traffic stops, half (13) involved situations where the officer-victim was unaware the driver or occupant of the suspect
vehicle was wanted for previously committing a serious felony. In eight cases the officers were unknowingly stopping vehicles previously stolen. In three cases the driver/assailant had an outstanding felony warrant and was able to kill the officer before the officer could determine the assailant’s status or react when confronted. In one case the driver/assailant had committed a series of murders just prior to being stopped. In another incident the occupants of the vehicle were transporting large quantities of illegal drugs. Tragically, this research reveals that most often the threat in a traffic stop is unknown to the officer at the time of the stop.

The FBI annual reports also record the status of the slain officers, in terms of whether the officer was in uniform or not. For non-state police officers, approximately two-thirds of the slain officers (N=356, 69%) were in uniform at the time they were killed. For state police officers the percentage was slightly higher (N=33, 79%). The remainder of the state police officers were either detectives (N=5) or off-duty (N=4). The percentage of slain off-duty state police officers appears high, but is consistent with the findings of other studies evaluating off-duty killings of police officers (Fyfe, 1980; Fyfe, 1988).3

Characteristics of Officer-Victims

Age: For 1985-1992, the average age for slain state police officers was 35.9 years, while the average age for non-state police officers was nearly identical, 36.0 years. However, when comparing the two categories of officers by age groups, most state police officers fell in the 40+ category, while most non-state police officers were in the 31-40 category. Additionally, far fewer state police officers were under the age of 25 (only one), while far more state police officers were over the age of 40. These numbers are partially explained by the nature of state police organizations and the structure under which they operate. Most state police organizations assign the majority of their sworn officers to patrol/traffic assignments. The vast majority of these “road troopers” continue in such positions, regardless of age, until retirement. Few state police organizations have the “luxury” of having administrative or “non-combatant” positions available for these older troopers. As a result, state police organizations, more than other agencies, tend to utilize older officers in field assignments thus, the likelihood increases, for state police organizations, that a slain officer (traffic/patrol being the highest risk category, see above) will be older and more experienced. This explanation for higher age and more experience of state police officers,
based on organization and assignment, is corroborated by the data relating to experience, outlined below.

**Experience:** The average experience level for slain state police officers was 11.4 years. This is significantly higher than the average of 9.9 years for non-state police officers. Most slain officers, in both categories, had over 10 years experience, dispelling the “conventional wisdom” only “rookie” officers, making stupid mistakes, are killed. Interestingly, and consistent with the findings regarding age outlined above, a greater percentage of state police officers fall into the 10+ category than non-state police officers (47% compared to 36%). Again, these numbers may be explained by the fact that state police organizations, more than other agencies, have older, more experienced, officers assigned to the riskiest duty – traffic/patrol.

**Gender:** For the 1985-1992 period, of the 519 non-state police officers slain, 507 (97%) were male and 12 (2%) were female. Of the 42 slain state police officers, all were male. Given that females represent less than five percent of the sworn officers in state police organizations (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994), it is not surprising to find that, to date, not a single female state police officer has been feloniously killed in the line of duty. Unfortunately, time and increased employment of female state police officers will most likely produce another unwanted “first,” the first felonious killing of a female state police officer.4

**Weapons**

During 1985-1992, of the 519 non-state police officers feloniously killed, 467 (90%) were killed by firearms. For state police officers the figure is quite similar, 40 of the 42 (95%) were killed by firearms. (One officer was intentionally struck by a vehicle and one officer was killed by a bomb.) An examination of officer deaths by type of firearm used, also reveals similar rates. For both groups, handguns represented the firearm accounting for most deaths, with the percentages of deaths in both groups being nearly identical: non-state police, 80 percent; state police 78 percent. The percentages for both rifles and shotguns were also nearly identical: non state police, 15 percent; state police 14 percent.

Within the handgun category, for both groups of officers, weapons of two calibers accounted for almost half of the deaths – the .38 and the .357. For non-state police officers, .38 caliber weapons accounted for 28 percent of the deaths while .357 caliber weapons accounted for 18
percent of the deaths. For state police officers the percentages were nearly reversed, .38 caliber weapons accounted for only 15 percent of deaths, while .357 caliber weapons were used in 26 percent of the deaths. Alarming, of the 467 non-state police officers feloniously killed by firearms, 15 percent (N=70) were killed with their own service weapons. Of these 70 officers, 22 (31%) were killed by .38 caliber service weapons and 33 (47%) killed with .357 caliber service weapons. For state police officers, the same percentage, 15 percent (N=6) were killed by their own service weapon, all by .357 caliber weapons. Interestingly, all six state police officers killed with their own weapons were killed during the period 1985-1988 (2 in 1985, 1 in 1986, 1 in 1987 and 2 in 1988).

To some degree, the figures indicating a much higher rate of death among state police officers from .357 caliber service weapons reflect the fact that, as of 1989, more (N=27) state police agencies had adopted .357 weapons as service weapons, than either .38 (N=4) or 9mm (N=15) (Michigan State Police, 1989). However, by 1993 the number of state police agencies adopting semi-automatics as service weapons had grown to 40 (Michigan State Police, 1993). Only time will tell if the transition to semi-automatics has been a factor in reducing the number of state police officers killed with their own service weapon.

With regard to deaths by rifle, for non-state police officers, the different calibers of rifles used ranged from .22 caliber to .44 magnum, with twelve different calibers of weapons being involved. Most rifle deaths for non-state police officers were inflicted by .22 caliber weapons (31%). For state police officers, only four different caliber rifles were involved (.22, .223, .30-06, and .44), with the .223 and .30-06 accounting for four of the six state police officer deaths. Again, the difference in the nature of assignments may offer some explanation as to the caliber of rifle used. Larger caliber rifles, such as the .30-06 and .44, are more likely to be found in, and associated with, rural settings, where the majority of state police officers are assigned. In fact, in much of rural America these large caliber rifles are commonly carried in racks in pick-up trucks, a sight rarely seen in more urban settings.

Shotguns account for a very small, yet strikingly similar, percent of the deaths for both groups of officers: non state police, five percent; state police, seven percent. Additionally, for both groups of officers the 12 gauge shotgun accounted for most of the deaths. Both of the state police officer deaths, and 28 of the 35 non-state police officer deaths by shotgun, were inflicted with a 12 gauge shotgun.
Assailants

The nature of the FBI annual reports and the methodology of this study created difficulty in making detailed comparisons of assailants. However, the FBI annual reports did offer some cumulative data for the period 1981-1990, for all officers, which could be “roughly” compared to the data on assailants of state police officers extracted from the narrative/descriptive accounts in the 1985-1992 annual reports.

During the period 1981-1990, for all officers, 1,039 assailants were identified. Of these, 842 (81%) were arrested, 140 (13%) justifiably killed, and 51 (5%) committed suicide. For state police officers, using the number of incidents (as opposed to individual assailants), during the period 1985-1992, 17 incidents (40%) resulted in the arrest of the assailant(s), 16 incidents (38%) resulted in the justifiable killing of the offenders, seven incidents (17%) resulted in the suicide of the assailants, and in two incidents (5%) the assailants are still at large. The most striking difference identified here, again recognizing that the comparison is not methodologically “perfect,” is the unusually high number of incidents involving state police officers where the assailants were either justifiably killed or committed suicide. Only 18 percent of assailants killing non-state police officers were killed or committed suicide, while in 55 percent of state police killings the assailants either were killed or committed suicide. Interestingly, for state police officers, during the most recent three year period (1990-1992) every single incident (N=14) resulted in the assailant either being killed (N=12) or committing suicide (N=2).

CONCLUSION

The law enforcement community is “blessed” with an abundance of data relating to the felonious killings of police officers. However, much of the research to date has focused on aggregate data or has lumped the findings into a general pool, referring to the killing of “police” in generic terms. Little research has been conducted at the national level to fine tune this plethora of information and evaluate the data in terms of specific type of agency or assignment. This preliminary examination of existing literature and data suggests some differences in the felonious killing of state police officers and sets the stage for additional research.

This research suggests state police officers are feloniously killed in proportional numbers to non-state police officers with the recent
downward trend in the number of deaths of state police officers mirroring the national downward trend for all officers. As with the figures for all officers, the South region evidences the greatest percentage of killings for state police officers, with certain states within the South region accounting for unusually high numbers of deaths, suggesting further study, perhaps by region or with states.

With regard to circumstances surrounding officer deaths, state police officers appear to be killed in demographic patterns similar to those of non-state police officers with regard to time of day, day of week, and month. In evaluating felonious killings of officers based on the activity of the officer, this research indicates state police officers are most often feloniously killed while engaged in traffic stops, consistent with state police officers’ assignments, which are primarily traffic and patrol related. A significant number of state police officers were killed while engaged in traffic stops for speeding. Furthermore, half of these stops involved situations where the victim-officer was unaware the driver or occupant of the vehicle was wanted for previously committing a serious felony. A slightly higher percentage of state police officers are feloniously killed while in uniform. Additionally, a significant number of the state police officers not in uniform were actually off-duty, with the greatest threat being posed by incidents of domestic violence and those occurring at or near the officer’s residence.

For state police officers, the characteristics of the officer-victim do reflect some differences from those of non-state police officers. Here, although the average age for the two groups was nearly identical, state police officers are older, in terms of age groups, and have significantly more experience. This is consistent with the nature of state police organizations and assignments, with most state police organizations assigning “road troopers” to traffic/patrol duties far longer than do urban agencies. Further research seems warranted with regard to gender or race; however, improved data collection and reporting methodology may be required before any meaningful analysis can be achieved.

An assessment of the weapons used to kill officers revealed additional differences. Firearms account for the vast majority of the deaths of both state police and non-state police officers, with the percentage of deaths in both categories exceeding 90 percent. Within this category, handguns are used in nearly 80 percent of the deaths for both groups. Two calibers of handguns (.38 and .357) account for nearly half of the killings, for both groups. The percentage of state police officers killed with their own service weapon is identical to non-state police officers, with one noticeable difference: the increased use of .357 caliber
service weapons in state police deaths, most likely a function of the higher proportion of state police agencies previously using these weapons as service weapons. These figures will most likely change, given the recent transition to semi-automatic service weapons by large numbers of state police agencies. Only further research will determine whether this transition has reduced the number of officers killed with their own weapons. The percentage of deaths by rifles and shotguns appear comparable between the two groups, although state police officers appear to be killed more frequently with larger caliber rifles. Again, this is most likely explained by the rural nature of state police assignments. With regard to body armor, again, this research suggests some differences exist between feloniously killed state police officers and non-state police officers, although the available data were of limited analytical value.

Although comparisons and evaluations of the data on assailants was difficult, certain information could be extracted and rough comparisons made. The most striking finding centered on the disposition of assailants involved. Far more assailants in the killing of state police officers are justifiably killed or commit suicide. Additionally, for state police officers, the data for the most recent three year period reveals that in every single case the offender was either killed or committed suicide.

What, then, are the implications of this study? For the administrators and training officers of the various state police organizations, this research serves as one piece of the puzzle to be used in determining the “big picture” regarding officer safety. This research suggests differences between the killing of state police officers and non-state police officers do exist. Where differences were identified, this preliminary analysis of the existing data serves to increase the awareness of these differences and contributes to the overall ability of agencies to reduce officer deaths. Armed with the findings from this study, state police trainers can emphasize, through empirical data, those aspects of the job posing the greatest risk, such as “routine” traffic stops. Additionally, similar to Konstantin’s (1984) findings, the findings here suggest that the myth that domestic disputes result in large numbers of police killings is simply not supported by the data. Finally, policy-makers can use the findings to ensure policies are adopted which promote officer safety, and at the same time are founded on legitimate, well-researched, information. Given the findings of this study, the mandatory wearing of body armor would be one example of such a policy.

Furthermore, this research offers the challenge of replication. What other trends, patterns, or characteristics can be identified using the FBI data? What differences exist in the killing of police officers in urban
agencies? In rural agencies? For large and small agencies? What role, if any, does the absence or presence of certain equipment (e.g. body armor or semi-automatic weapons) play in officer deaths? Additionally, this study sets the stage for research into the differences, if any, in the felonious killings of police officers based on race or gender. Finally, this research serves to encourage the continued collection and evaluation of the data on the felonious killings of police officers. Specifically, the FBI is challenged to pursue the collection of data in a format lending itself to evaluations such as this. Just as the collection of data relating to body armor began rather innocuously, other specific information should now be included in the annual reports. Follow-up reports outlining specific disposition of assailants, for example, would be extremely helpful. Research assessing the differences in the felonious killings of police officers by region or type of agency is encouraged.

The data regarding the felonious killing of police officers are being collected, the reports containing this data are being generated – now researchers must explore and evaluate this information with an eye toward identifying significant differences and commonalties. Efforts must be made to utilize this vast array of information relating to officer killings to assist the law enforcement community in reducing officer deaths.

NOTES

1. Generally, state police organizations are divided into two classifications or categories, “highway patrol” and “state police.” The International Association of Chiefs of Police employ this characterization and define the two as follows: “highway patrol” agencies have a uniformed field patrol, police services restricted to, or concentrated on traffic, vehicle, and highway-related activities (Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming); “state police” agencies have a uniformed field patrol, responsible for general police services (Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia) (IACP, 1975).
2. The term “felonious killing” refers to those officers whose deaths resulted from intentional acts by third parties. Accidental or self-inflicted deaths are not included in either the FBI annual reports or in this study.

3. The four incidents involving the off-duty deaths of state police officers involved the following situations: one officer was killed as part of a robbery occurring while walking to his car after leaving a restaurant; one officer was killed in an incident where he came upon what appeared to be a routine traffic accident but was, in reality a violent domestic dispute; one officer was killed in an incident where a suspicious individual contacted the officer at home and killed the officer as he was attempting to conduct an investigation into the status of the individual, and finally, an officer was killed when he responded to a domestic incident in his apartment complex.

4. Unfortunately, a direct comparison of non-state police officer deaths and state police deaths, employing race as a variable, was not possible, given the methodology involved and the manner in which the FBI reports the data on the race of the officers. For all officers killed during the period 1985-1992, 87 percent were white, 12 percent black and the remaining one percent Asian and Native Alaskan. These figures are comparable to the national figures relating to the race of police officers: 87 percent white, 7.5 percent black, 4.4 percent Hispanic (not reported in the FBI annual reports) and one percent other (Department of Justice, 1994). Neither the narrative descriptions nor the statistical data from the FBI annual reports, however, permit identification of the race of slain state police officers, although this information is presumably reported. The value of the FBI annual reports could certainly be enhanced by including the racial and/or ethnic background of the officer in the narrative descriptions.

5. A related issue involves the degree to which body armor serves to protect victim-officers. Although data regarding body armor were difficult to extract and evaluate, certain trends could be identified. For the period 1985-1992, 24 percent (115) of all non-state police officers feloniously killed by firearms were wearing body armor. The fatal gunshot wounds inflicted on these officers were as follows: 81 (70%) suffered head wounds, 33 (29%) were wounded in the upper torso, and one(1%) incurred wounds below the waist. Similarly, 30 percent (12) of the 40 state police officers feloniously killed by firearms during the period 1985-1992 were wearing body armor. The gunshot wounds inflicted on these officers was as follows: five (42%) were to the head, seven (58%) were to the upper torso, and none were below the waist.
The most striking difference in these figures is that far more state police officers who are killed while wearing body armor receive fatal wounds in the upper torso. Most of these officers were struck in “gaps” in the protective armor.

6. During the period 1985-1988 only one police officer was reported killed by a 9mm service weapon. However, in the period 1989-1992 seven officers were slain by 9mm service weapons. Given the recent, and rapid, increase in the number of departments transitioning to semi-automatic 9mm and 10mm service weapons, an increase in officer deaths from semi-automatic service weapons is only to be expected, and was, in fact, confirmed by the data during this study.

7. The finding that most state police officers are killed while engaged in traffic stops does not necessarily translate into a conclusion that traffic stops pose the greatest “risk” of being killed. Given the tremendous number of traffic stops performed by state police officers (conservatively estimated at nearly nine million per year), other activities may very well have a higher “per event” ratio, and thus have a greater “risk” involved. Only additional research, possibly comparing rates per 1,000 incidents, will clarify “risk” by type of activity.

REFERENCES


