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Submission date: 25-Jul-2021 02:47PM (UTC-0400)

Submission ID: 1623822837

File name: Texas_Waco_Shootout.edited.docx (14.94K)

Word count: 878

Character count: 4878

Texas Waco's Biker Shootout

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Texas Waco's Biker Shootout

On the 17th of May, 2015, nine individuals lost their lives while close to twenty others were injured when a brawl ensued between two rival biker gangs at the Twin Peaks eatery in Waco. A gun battle ensued concerning the Bandidos and the Cossacks at around noon on a Sunday (WITHERSPOON, 2019). Police officers were aware of the trouble ensuing, were present at the scene, and engaged some bikers when the gunfight started. The lawyers involved in the case credited some officers with averting extensive loss of life and injuries. Following the melee, 177 suspects were detained at the scene and later arraigned for engaging in organized crime. Each suspect was held on a one million bond that was subsequently reviewed downwards.

Only a single biker was tried, culminating in a travesty of justice in November 2017 once a panel failed to reach a unanimous verdict on the accusations levied on Jacob Carrizal, a thirty-five-year-old president of the Dallas Bandidos faction. He was arraigned for guiding the actions of an unlawful element on double charges of participating in planned crime, with the principal transgressions of aggravated assault and manslaughter. However, in April 2019, all the pending charges linked with the two biker gangs were dropped by the new prosecutor, meaning no one will be held accountable for the nine deaths and the several injuries in the melee.

Based on the facts of this case, both the law enforcement officers and the prosecution team faced a myriad of challenges. For instance, investigators have found it hard to obtain crucial evidence to lead to successful convictions because their lives are at stake (WFAA, 2018). The biker gangs threaten the police with retaliation, making investigations difficult, especially when they are accused of the fatal shooting of some of the nine victims. In addition to that, gang members do not turn on their brothers, so it can be difficult for the investigators to successfully interrogate the bikers and gain crucial evidence regarding the intricate details of the shootout.

For the prosecution team, one of the major challenges is vested interests. It has been alleged that former district attorney Abel Reyna was in business with the biker gangs, and he was not the right person to prosecute the case (WFAA, 2018). In addition to that, the prosecution team relies on evidence produced by the investigators. Still, where such evidence is not sufficient, or investigations are not conducted properly, acquittal is eminent, like in this case. The blanket arrest of the biker gang members has been criticized since the authorities did not conduct investigations before the arrests were made. In addition to that, the prosecution was already biased. Where the prosecution is unbiased, they are afraid of prosecuting some of the cases involving biker gangs out of fear of retaliation (CBS This Morning, 2015). The prosecution chooses which cases to prosecute based on the evidence and, more importantly, convenience.

Based on what is present in this case, Nathan (2017) argues that using an undercover police officer to investigate outlawed motorcycle gangs is not easier because they can be easily mistaken to have adopted a contrary position that favors the gangs. In addition, undercover investigators might find themselves exposed to violence and other criminal activities embraced by the biker gangs. Biker gangs are solid entities, and it is difficult to find a gang member agreeing to cooperate with the prosecution or the police for leniency. Where a gang member agrees to cooperate, they might find life hard because they and their families are not safe, whether in prison or under protective custody. For this reason, many gang members who are arrested will not take a plea deal and offer evidence or become state witnesses in cases involving their gangs. These are individuals who are proud to go to jail to protect their gangs. In this aspect, using a gang member to turn on their colleague cannot work in this case. In addition, this method is ineffective because some police officers and biker gangs stand on similar ground.

Nathan (2017) suggests that both are adventurous, young and trade their badges and cruisers for club membership during off days making the method ineffective.

To sum it up, no one has been convicted in the Texas Waco biker gang shootout that left nine people dead because the prosecutor was unwilling to prosecute the case successfully. In addition to that, the investigations were not handled properly, leading to the acquittal of all the suspects. Before the arrests, there were no proper investigations, meaning that the case was doomed from the moment it started. When gang members are unwilling to divulge crucial information and the undercover police officers find themselves being charged alongside the people they investigate, it points to a dysfunctional justice system that cannot realize any meaningful progress.

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