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EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Two More DC Police Officers Who Defended Capitol Die by Suicide

A total of 4 law enforcement officers who fought back the January 6 insurrection by a pro-Trump mob have taken their lives.



By Don Rauf

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✓ Fact-Checked



A mob stormed the Capitol on January 6. The effects are still being felt by those who endured the attack and tried to protect lawmakers inside. Kent Nishimura/Los Angeles Times via Getty Images

The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) in Washington, DC, confirmed on Monday that two more law enforcement officers who defended the Capitol against violent pro-Trump rioters on January 6 died by suicide during the month of July.

The number of police who have now taken their lives following the mob attack has risen to four.

MPD spokesperson Kristen Metzger [told CNN in a statement on August 3](#) that 43-year-old Officer Gunther Hashida, assigned to the Emergency Response Team within the Special Operations Division, was found deceased in his residence on Thursday, July 29.

"Officer Hashida was a hero, who risked his life to save our Capitol, the Congressional community, and our very democracy," said Speaker of House Nancy Pelosi [in a statement on August 2](#). "All Americans are indebted to him for his great valor and patriotism on January 6 and throughout his selfless service."

The MPD also revealed that 26-year-old Officer Kyle deFreytag was found dead of apparent suicide on July 10.

According to [his online obituary](#), "Kyle was kind, he had a quick wit and a great sense of humor, and kept us laughing for 26 years."

In January, within weeks of the attack that began when then President Trump urged supporters to march to the Capitol, two other officers — Jeffery Smith of the MPD and

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...supposed to be the deputy and then someone ... going to ... and ...
Howard Liebengood of the Capitol Police — had died by suicide.

"The scale of the January 6 riots was unprecedented and cops felt the loss of control and helplessness that could endanger their lives," said [Indra Cidambi, MD](#), a [psychiatrist](#) and medical director at the Center for Network Therapy in Middlesex, New Jersey. "It is not surprising that suicide rates are spiking in this already vulnerable population."


Studies confirm that suicide rates are particularly high among officers and others in public safety occupations, [according to the National Officer Safety Initiatives](#).


[Timothy Sullivan, MD](#), chair of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Staten Island University Hospital, believes that to some degree social shaming may have played a role in these cases.

"There's sociological evidence that when people are subject to to social blaming, it can be a profound stress," said Dr. Sullivan. "We've seen this in social media with young people who are shamed or harassed and who then commit suicide. I'm very concerned for the officers because there's been a lot of discussion in the media that I would characterize as shaming — that really undermines the officers' credibility and the pain of what they experienced — and that's really unhealthy."

Sullivan recommends that someone who is having dark thoughts or notions of hurting themselves reach out to hotlines, clinics, and hospitals that offer counseling. Similarly, if you know someone going through a dark period, you can reach out to these services on their behalf.


The [U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) provides help any time of day or night or chat online.




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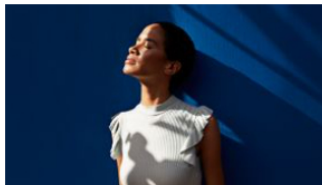
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