

# Richmond Police Officer Burton has us ‘all awash in grief and tragedy,’ clinical psychologist says

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Clinical psychologist offers insights in Richmond police officer shooting

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CENTERVILLE — The tragedy of Richmond Police Officer Seara Burton and the recent killings of three law enforcement officers in the Dayton area in the last several months has left a sadness for communities and the officers who serve with those victims, clinical psychologist Dr. Kathy Platoni said Friday.

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“I think we’re all awash in grief and tragedy, especially in the law enforcement community,” she said to News Center 7’s Brandon Lewis in an interview. “I can’t even begin to describe the horror. . . they are going through in the aftermath of this.”

Dr. Platoni, who is based in Centerville, works with police, first responders, Dayton SWAT and is editor of “Combat Stress” magazine. She has 40 years of military service and is a retired Army colonel.

She said she has seen a lot of emotional devastation in combat, but it’s more difficult to deal with that trauma so close to home. The shooting of Burton on Aug. 10, the shooting of Clearcreek Township Police Officer Eric Ney and the fatal shooting of Clark County Sheriff’s Deputy Matthew Yates in July leave law enforcement with unanswered questions and self-blame.

“It’s extremely hard for those officers to navigate life, both on duty and off duty, with so much grief, agony and anguish,” Dr. Platoni said. “I’m trying to navigate with them.”

Experiencing so much grief at home, she said, “takes away the sense that we have a safe place in which to live because it has become so prevalent and has happened so many times.”

Everyone, it seems, is praying. There have been prayers offered for Officer Burton and the other area officers who have been cut down by violence.

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“There are no atheists in foxholes, as we said in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Dr. Platoni said. “I think a lot of people have turned to prayer in the absence of knowing what else to do and feeling powerless to make a situation better that’s not getting any better at this point. ”

She lauded the Dayton Police Department, the Dayton Fraternal Order of Police, the Richmond Police Department and other area law enforcement agencies for stepping up to support Officer Burton and her family.

Dr. Platoni called Officer Burton’s family “extraordinary human beings” she wishes she could have met under other circumstances. “They are tough as nails. And so is her fiancée. They have taught me a lot. You can’t read this kind of stuff in books.”

What can the community do?

“I think this is a time we need to reassess how we perceive our law enforcement community. It’s time to support (participating in fundraisers for families and law enforcement departments, vigils, messages of hope, etc.) and not malign. This is a time we need to take stock of what these people are about and what they do. They do what they do so the rest of us don’t have to. Be acutely aware of that,” Dr. Platoni said.

For her part, the psychologist said she will continue to work with any and all law enforcement officers -- in Richmond and anywhere else -- who need help.

“I will go to the ends of the earth to provide what they need. I’m going to take care of them for as long as they need it. . . and as long as command staff continues to support that,” Dr. Platoni said.

“Mental health and wellness for police officers in the aftermath of a line of duty injury or a line of duty death is absolutely critical. That, and officer suicide, is the worst of the worst and that’s when these officers need the most help,” she said.