

Police violence in Minneapolis after university hockey game

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Last Saturday night Minneapolis police dressed in riot gear used tear gas, flash grenades, and paint pellets against a crowd in city's Dinkytown neighborhood near the University of Minnesota. The crowd was reacting to the university hockey team's loss to Union College in the NCAA Frozen Four championship game.

Many police officers were on horses and bicycles, and a State Patrol helicopter flew overhead. Nineteen people were arrested by the combined force of about 300 officers.

Hours before the game, police deactivated parking meters and towed away cars parked on the main commercial streets. Law enforcement set up a camera near Fourth Street and 14th Avenue, and an unmarked police SUV patrolled the area.

One student told the *Star Tribune*, "It was just too much, just unnecessary. I saw one guy down on the ground, and cops just swarmed him." The eyewitness refused to identify himself out of a well-founded fear that he would be punished by the university simply for being present.

The day before the championship game, University of Minnesota president Eric Kaler sent an email to students warning them that the school would exercise "zero tolerance" in relation to any incidents that might occur and making the remarkable claim that "Just being present and watching a riot is, in itself, a violation of the Student Conduct Code."

The university's Vice President for University Services, Pam Wheelock, echoed Kaler's remarks that day, stating, "If you are here, you are part of the incident and subject to arrest," and threatening, "Remember, if things escalate police don't distinguish between bystanders and participants."

The university had a willing partner in Minneapolis Police Chief Janeé Harteau, who asserted that because

her officers were ordering people to disperse, "Technically, everyone here could be arrested." In the aftermath of Saturday's repression, police have appealed to the public to send them video or other evidence that might be useful to law enforcement. In his Friday email, Kaler threatened ominously that, "In this era of social media, no one is anonymous."

Although claims have been made in the media that Saturday's police presence was merely a response to rioting that broke out in Dinkytown two days earlier after a win by the hockey team, University Police Chief Greg Hestness stated on Friday that "planning for Saturday has been underway for two months."

Indeed, the police response to Thursday's game had also been prepared well in advance. More than 100 officers dressed in riot gear used pepper spray and tear gas, and shot bean bags to disperse crowds in Dinkytown with a State Patrol helicopter flying overhead on that occasion as well. Prior to Thursday's game, police conducted a door-knocking effort warning residents of the potential for hockey-related misbehavior, and the university sent out an email advising students how to conduct themselves.

Police arrested 10 people in connection with Thursday's game. University senior McKenzie Lagodinski told the *Minnesota Daily* that an officer pushed her to the ground when she confronted police about their arrest of a man. In regard to the arrest of another woman, she stated, "It looked like they were whipping her around like a rag doll." When Lagodinski herself was arrested for unlawful assembly, "they tackled me to the ground and got me into handcuffs, and I got kind of beat up, kind of sore."

Another student, Shaili Zappa told the *Daily* that she saw a man on roller blades "get stopped by officers, put in a headlock and escorted into a squad car. 'He wasn't

really doing anything bad at all,' she said." Student Kallie McBride told the *Star Tribune* that she saw officers shooting paint pellets or tear gas and that "people near me were hit."

"With all the sirens and helicopters, it felt like a war zone," recent university graduate Austin Duket, 22, told the *Pioneer Press*.

The massive police response to the unruly fans was completely out of proportion to any threat the latter presented.

The riot in Minneapolis is the latest in a series at college sports events, including a number associated with the recent NCAA basketball tournament. There is nothing socially progressive about drunken students brawling with police, but the rash of violence, including a major confrontation in Santa Barbara, California between police and a crowd of 15,000 people on April 5, speaks to growing social tensions in the US.

On the other hand, the authorities continue to extend their apparatus of repression. In 2012, Janet Napolitano, then Secretary of Homeland Security, appointed Kaler to the Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council. Napolitano asserted that "President Kaler's extensive experience and expertise will make him a valuable asset to the Council."



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