

More arrests in Ferguson, Missouri after police chief “apologizes”

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Tensions in Ferguson, Missouri show no sign of subsiding seven weeks after the police killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown.

In recent days, local police officials have responded to ongoing protests by combining arrests and violence against demonstrators with empty apologies. On Thursday, Ferguson Police Chief Tom Jackson released a video in which he apologized for leaving Michael Brown’s body on the asphalt for four hours, but did not acknowledge that his killer, Darren Wilson, did anything wrong in shooting the unarmed young man six times.

“Please know that the investigating officers meant no disrespect to the Brown family,” Jackson said, adding to the parents that he was “truly sorry for the loss of your son.”

Brown’s killer has yet to have any charges brought against him. St. Louis County Prosecutor Bob McCulloch said last week that he does not expect a grand jury to come to a decision on whether to bring charges until mid-November. The grand jury has been granted an extension through early January, meaning that it might not come to a decision for five months following Brown’s killing.

Michael Brown’s father said Saturday in an interview with the Associated Press that “an apology would be when Darren Wilson was handcuffed, processed, and charged with murder.”

Later on Thursday evening, Jackson attempted to address a crowd of demonstrators, saying: “I’m sorry, and I said that from my heart. I had tried to get that off my chest. It’s been sitting there for two months.”

The crowd responded with indignation to Jackson’s apologies, with one demonstrator yelling: “If you are not resigning tonight, go home.”

When Jackson attempted to march with

demonstrators, police arrested several demonstrators who expressed their opposition to the chief’s presence.

Jackson’s apology came two days after police attacked and injured several demonstrators who had gathered on West Flourissant Avenue after a memorial for Michael Brown was burned earlier in the day. Missouri State Highway Patrol Captain Ron Johnson said that he ordered the police to clear demonstrators on Tuesday because protestors were yelling and invading officers’ “personal space.”

The dominant sentiment amongst Ferguson police officers is hardly one of regret over the killing of Michael Brown. To the contrary, photos taken by demonstrators reveal that many officers on duty at demonstrations were wearing wristbands bearing the words “I am Darren Wilson” in support of the officer responsible for killing Brown.

Meanwhile, reports of two nearby shooting incidents on Saturday night underscore the continuing scale of social tensions in the suburban Midwestern city.

The first shooting took place at a community roughly two miles from the evening demonstrations on West Flourissant. According to initial reports, a resident fired shots at a police officer who was responding to a burglary call in the area. According to St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar, the officer “was able to get off a couple of shots” and was shot in the arm in the exchange. He is expected to live.

A second incident occurred several hours later, when an off-duty St. Louis police officer said he took fire from another car as he drove down a major freeway that passes through Ferguson. The officer sustained minor injuries.

Few details of the shootings have emerged, with police stating that neither incident was related to the demonstrations. Regardless of the veracity of these

claims, the shootings will be used by the police to justify further crackdowns on protestors.

Just minutes after the shooting in Ferguson, dozens of police cars rushed to the area, and police armed with assault rifles took up positions around the perimeter of the scene.

USA Today noted that police went on a ninety minute “manhunt” for the alleged shooter, while Captain Johnson appeared nearby at the scene of protests and ordered the crowd to disperse.

In a speech before a gathering of the Congressional Black Caucus Saturday, President Obama noted that the police crackdown on peaceful protestors has been an embarrassment to the administration as it launches a new war in the name of preserving “democracy.”

“Ferguson was used by some of America’s enemies and critics to deflect attention from their shortcomings overseas; to undermine our efforts to promote justice around the world,” he said.

Announcing that this conception was ill-placed on the absurd grounds that “we address our differences in the open space of democracy,” Obama said Ferguson should not detract from the need “to rally the world against Russian aggression in Ukraine” and “degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group known as ISIL.”

But Obama, whose administration has been intimately involved in the police crackdown in Ferguson while making no calls for Wilson’s arrest, anxiously warned that “a gulf of mistrust exists between local residents and law enforcement” in “too many communities around the country.”



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