

National Guard called up in response to Milwaukee protest over police violence

Kristina Betinis
22 December 2014

In the wake of protests against police violence that shut down a Milwaukee freeway Friday and resulted in the arrest of 74 people, the state is preparing for the National Guard to intervene at the behest of local law enforcement.

Seventy-four of an estimated 100 protesters were arrested on Friday. At about 5 p.m., the protesters drove onto Interstate 43, stopped their cars and got out, blocking traffic in both directions for over an hour to demand that the state of Wisconsin file charges against Milwaukee police officer Christopher Manney for the murder of Dontre Hamilton.

Friday's protest was the latest act of opposition to the police killing of 31-year-old Hamilton. Manney shot Hamilton 14 times in a city park on April 30 after the officer provoked a confrontation with the unarmed man who was sleeping on a bench.

Late Friday evening, members of Hamilton's family and supporters gathered outside the Milwaukee police administration building awaiting the release of those who had been arrested. Dontre's brother, Nate Hamilton said, "They [the police] arrested my cousin Letoya after they told us to get to the sidewalk. They run up on us. She was standing right next to me. I could have been arrested myself, but they grabbed her, slammed her to the ground."

All of those who were arrested Friday night, including a journalist from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, have since been released.

Protests regarding Hamilton's murder began in July and have continued amid a wave of social anger that has erupted in protests across the United States against police violence in the wake of two grand jury decisions not to indict the police officers responsible for the killings of Michael Brown of Ferguson, Missouri in August and Eric Garner of Staten Island, New York in

July of this year. The National Guard has been called out twice in Missouri since August by Democratic Governor Jay Nixon.

According to several media reports about Hamilton's murder, employees at a nearby Starbucks called Milwaukee police to report a man sleeping in the park. Prior to Manney's arrival, two other Milwaukee police officers had already investigated the situation, and concluded that the unarmed man, Hamilton, was not causing any disturbance.

When Manney arrived on the scene and attempted a pat-down, Hamilton, who suffered from schizophrenia, fought the officer off. Manney then hit Hamilton with his baton. In the course of their struggle Hamilton allegedly got the baton away from the officer, and struck him with it. Manney then fired 14 shots from his service weapon into Hamilton, ending his life.

In October, the city of Milwaukee released Manney's name to the public, and revealed he had been fired, not for Hamilton's murder, but for patting him down—a violation of city policy on approaching mentally unstable citizens.

A decision from the state whether to press charges against Manney is expected in the next few days.

Republican Governor of Wisconsin Scott Walker earlier in the week declared his support for the state's National Guard to be deployed in response to growing protests. On December 17, Walker discussed the plans made by local law enforcement and the Wisconsin National Guard regarding the ongoing protests against the police killing: "We proactively worked to make sure the National Guard was reaching out. They've been having meetings with law enforcement here within the region just to make sure.

"The last thing I want is for them to get a call and then have to scurry about what they need to do. We said

whenever it is, whenever it might be forthcoming, the last few weeks, we made sure they reached out to both [Milwaukee Police Chief Edward] Flynn and the sheriff and others to make sure they knew who the point person was.”

No specific mission for the Wisconsin National Guard has been given; rather they are being prepared to respond to requests from local police.

Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke made a statement Saturday in which he referred to receiving “actual intelligence about anarchist groups attempting to engage in specific unlawful acts that included blockades on the interstate system along I-43 and I-94.”

Clarke went on, “Last night was what mob rule and mob behavior look like. Mob behavior will result in arrests.”

On Saturday, new rules regarding protests were issued by the city requiring protesters to submit planned protest routes to city police.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact