

Over forty arrested in St. Louis as demonstrations continue against acquittal of killer cop

Genevieve Leigh
18 September 2017

Police intensified their crackdown on protesters in St. Louis, Missouri on Sunday as demonstrations against police violence continued into the third day.

The protests erupted Friday afternoon following the announcement that police officer Jason Stockley was acquitted of first degree murder and armed criminal action in the 2011 killing of 24-year-old Anthony Lamar Smith.

Stockley, who is white, fired five bullets at point-blank range into Smith, who was African-American, while the victim was seated in his car after a three-mile chase. A police car dashcam recorded Stockley telling his partner in advance of the shooting, “We’re killing this motherfucker, don’t you know.” An FBI firearms analyst testified at the trial that one shot was discharged from only six inches away.

After the murder, video recordings show Stockley going into his police car to get a gun, which he then planted in the car of the dead victim. Only Stockley’s DNA was found on the gun.

Considering the precedent upheld across the board by both Democrats and Republicans of blanket immunity for killer cops it is hardly a surprise that Stockley was acquitted. However, the sheer amount of evidence and the blatant murderous character of the event makes his exoneration particularly egregious.

Demonstrations erupted immediately following the announcement and attracted as many as one thousand people at their peak. Protests were held outside of police department headquarters and numerous marches took place throughout the city Friday evening. On Saturday, hundreds held demonstrations in West County Center shopping mall in the city of Des Peres, west of St. Louis, and at Chesterfield Mall in the

suburb of Chesterfield. Saturday’s demonstrations culminated in a gathering at the home of Democratic mayor, Lyda Krewson, where at least one window was broken after something was thrown at it.

With the memories of the massive upheavals which erupted in Ferguson in 2014--only a 20-minute drive from St. Louis--state and local authorities had anticipated protests over the exoneration of yet another killer cop. Officials spent the past week preparing to impose a virtual lockdown on the city. Barricades were erected around police headquarters and the courthouse, among other sites, and Republican Governor Eric Greitens activated the National Guard on Thursday ahead of the announcement.

As early as 6:30 p.m. on Friday the St. Louis Police Department had determined that the protests were “no longer considered peaceful,” which they announced in a tweet. They claimed that demonstrators were ignoring commands to leave the streets, making all of those in the area subject to arrest.

Reports indicate that at least thirty-three people were arrested during Friday’s protests and an additional nine Saturday night through Sunday morning. According to officials, four of the nine people arrested will face felony destruction of property charges. Among those arrested were two minors and the other seven ranged in age from 22 to 37 years old.

The St. Louis Police Department took to Twitter to justify their actions throughout the weekend.

On Friday they posted pictures of rocks and water bottles that they claimed had been thrown at officers throughout the day adding that “officers showed great restraint.”

These photos stand in sharp contrast to the videos and

photos posted by the protesters of hundreds of police officers dressed in riot gear and armed to the teeth with military-grade weaponry attacking protesters.

Their “restraint” included firing pepper-spray balls and tear gas against the overwhelmingly peaceful demonstrators. In one instance police in riot gear marched over a woman after she was knocked to the ground. When several people rushed to her assistance they were also knocked to the ground by police officers armed with shields and large bats.

Krewson and Geitens were also active on their Twitter accounts throughout the weekend making veiled threats to the protesters and offering their full support for the police force.

Greitens publicly bolstered the law-and-order campaign, tweeting praise of the police actions and posting videos of himself shaking hands with law enforcement. Bragging in a Tweet on Saturday, he wrote “some criminals broke windows & thought they’d get away. They were wrong. Officers caught ‘em, cuffed ‘em, and threw ‘em in Jail.” The video posted along with the tweet shows five officers hauling away a cuffed young man who appears to be unconscious.

The brutal murder of Anthony Lamar Smith and the subsequent violent crackdown on protesters by the political establishment are, in a very direct way, the product of twenty-five years of unending US wars abroad, with the same military gear and tactics being against the working class at home.

The officer responsible for the killing, Stockley, is a West Point graduate who served with the Army in the Iraq war. He carried his personal AK-47-style rifle with him as an officer in St. Louis, and noted in the trial that he felt that his life and the life of his fellow officers “depended on it”--a perspective likely ingrained in him throughout his time around the various military institutions.

Greitens, the most enthusiastic cheerleader of the St. Louis police force through the weekend, comes out of a long career in the military establishment, having served for years as a Navy Seal, the most notoriously brutal arm of the United States military Special Forces.

President Donald Trump and the Department of Justice under Attorney General Jeff Sessions have been vehement defenders of killer cops and violent police forces. Speaking for police officers in August, Trump

encouraged them to be “rough” with those they were arresting. Later that month, he signed an order reinstating the federal program that supplies military weapons and equipment to local and state police forces.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact