

Former Dallas police chief who used a robot to kill shooting suspect appointed Chicago's top cop

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On April 2, Chicago Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced that former Dallas Police Chief David Brown will become the next superintendent of the Chicago Police Department (CPD). The appointment of Brown, infamous for deploying a remote controlled robot to kill a suspected mass shooter with C-4 explosive in 2016, is part of plans to intensify the repression of the city's working class in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Lightfoot has hailed Brown as a police reformer who will be more accountable and transparent. Pointing to his previous record as police chief of the Dallas Police Department (DPD) in creating "community policing initiatives," Lightfoot claims that Brown will lead a period of reform and change for the Chicago Police Department, which has a decades-long history of violence overseen by the Democratic Party.

Under Brown's leadership between 2010 and 2016, the DPD used deadly violence and excessive force repeatedly. According to the Police Data Initiative, over 100 residents of Dallas were shot by police officers during Brown's tenure as police chief and 37 were killed.

Dallas police were given unprecedented powers by Brown to inflict terror on working class communities. A report from the Better Government Association in 2015 showed that Dallas ranked third in the United States for fatal police shootings with a fatality rate of 2.7 per 100,000 residents. According to data from the Police Data Initiative, in 2019 there were a higher number of arrests within lower income neighborhoods relative to higher income neighborhoods in Dallas.

In 2016, under Brown's orders, Dallas police force used a robot to kill Micah X. Johnson, an Afghanistan

war veteran, after he ambushed a group of police officers, killing five and injuring nine others. It was the first time in US history that a robot was used with lethal force outside of a military war zone. Brown defended his actions stating, "we saw no other option but to use our bomb robot and place a device on its extension for it to detonate where the suspect was."

The decision by Brown to kill Johnson with a bomb by remote control was a criminal and extrajudicial act, despite his heinous actions. Brown served as judge, jury, and executioner, effectively denying Johnson his right to a trial. With the use of the deadly robot Brown introduced technology typically reserved for military battlefields onto US soil setting a dangerous precedent for police forces all over the country. While Brown defended his actions, stating that he had no choice but to deliver the bomb, he was widely criticized for not choosing a less deadly method of apprehending the suspect.

Brown's tenure as Superintendent of CPD will be no different from his time as Dallas Police Chief. Like Dallas, Chicago also has a long history of its police meting out wanton violence against the working class. The appointment of Brown is not a break from the past but will be a deepening of the violence deployed against the working class.

All previous claims of police oversight and "reform" of the CPD have done nothing to stop police violence and killings in Chicago. The CPD is perhaps most notorious for the torture operation carried out by police commander Jon Burge between 1972 and 1991. The city of Chicago is currently under a court-ordered consent decree following the cover-up of the police murder of Laquan McDonald in 2014 by the previous

administration of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, a one-time aide to President Barack Obama.

The eventual release of the video of the brutal killing of McDonald in 2015 provoked mass protests in Chicago. In an effort at damage control, the Justice Department intervened with a scathing report of the CPD's systematic practices of police violence and brutality and recommended a court-monitored consent decree to enact "reforms." The 161-page document examined cases from the past two decades. One noted incident involved an officer pointing a gun at teenagers on bicycles and accusing them of trespassing. Another involved an officer who used a Taser on an unarmed, mentally ill, 65-year-old woman.

In 2017, the Justice Department and then Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan worked out a court order with Emanuel, but he failed to comply with any request for a federal judge's oversight. Widely hated by the population for his cover-up of the McDonald police murder, and his attacks on the working class, Emanuel announced he would not seek re-election, but worked out a deal for court oversight with Madigan in 2018. In early 2019, US District Judge Robert Dow Jr. approved a court order to enforce a consent decree.

Mayor Lightfoot's claims that the CPD will be more accountable under her and Brown's leadership than under the previous administration are refuted by her long record as a defender of police violence. A court report filed last fall noted that the city of Chicago failed to meet 37 of 50 deadlines for the limited court orders for reform. Of the 577 paragraphs in the decree, the city under the Lightfoot administration and the CPD had failed to comply with 52 of them. The court report found that police officers have continued to use methods associated with the deadly use of force.

During the early 2000s Lightfoot was chief administrator of the CPD's Office of Professional Standards (OPS), which sided with high-ranking officers over her own investigators. Her investigators had recommended that a cop be fired for lying repeatedly about a fatal shooting they found unjustified. Lightfoot declared the shooting justified and recommended a 30-day suspension for the officer. Providing no explanation, Lightfoot also ruled police officer Phyllis Clinkscale was justified in shooting an unarmed 17-year-old male, reversing a decision that the officer be fired. Lightfoot also played a leading role

on Emanuel's Police Board and his Police Accountability Task Force, which continued to whitewash police violence.

The appointment of Brown to become the top cop of the CPD by Lightfoot will only increase the repressive attacks against the working class as the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic spreads. A recent *Sun-Times* editorial gives voice to the concerns of the ruling class. It states: "And once the pandemic has passed, we have to wonder—forgive our pessimism—whether violent crime in the city will grow only worse. The weather will be warmer, unemployment will be higher." For her part, Lightfoot dismissed concerns about the severity of the pandemic in February as Chicago area hospitals currently prepare for a surge of COVID-19 cases.

Most recently, Amazon workers in Chicago have refused to work, protesting hazardous conditions, while thousands of workers are going on strike and protesting across the country to demand safety during the pandemic.

Last year, thousands of Chicago teachers and other educators went on strike to oppose the horrendous conditions in schools and low pay for teachers, joining a wave of teacher strikes that swept the US and five continents internationally. Lightfoot, with the aid of the Chicago Teachers Union, imposed a sellout contract on the teachers despite widespread opposition. With the end of the strike, Lightfoot announced her austerity budget promising increased policing and austerity on behalf of the corporate and financial aristocracy.

The financial aristocracy fears that opposition in the working class will intensify as economic conditions deteriorate and police repression will be necessary to protect their interests. Lightfoot, as her counterparts around the world, is preparing for repressive measures. The failures of the capitalist system and every government's criminally neglectful response to the global pandemic will drive millions of workers across the world and in Chicago into a struggle for their lives.



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