

Indianapolis cops fire pepper balls on group protesting police shooting of Dreasjon Reed

Kevin Reed
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Indianapolis police fired pepper balls at demonstrators on Saturday who had gathered for the fourth day in a row to protest the shooting death of 21-year-old Dreasjon “Sean” Reed by an officer on May 6 following a high-speed vehicle chase.

During the protest, a 41-year-old man was arrested for allegedly obstructing traffic and disorderly conduct. A statement from Michael Hewitt of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department said that pepper balls—pellets used to spread a powdered chemical that irritates the eyes and nose—were fired “to deter a crowd as they closed in on officers creating an unsafe environment for officers and protesters.”

However, at least two videos recorded on Saturday show a group of police officers moving in on the protesters, grabbing one of them and pulling him back across the street, where he is handcuffed. When the crowd expresses verbal opposition to the police action, one or more of the officers fires multiple pepper ball rounds into the group. Dozens of squad cars and police on horseback are seen on the videos in a show of force against the protesters.

Approximately one hundred people had assembled at the corner of 62nd Street and Michigan Road on the northwest side of Indianapolis, where Reed was fatally shot at around 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday by a police officer who has yet to be identified. The IMPD reported that both Reed and the officer were African American.

As reported here on the *World Socialist Web Site*, the shooting was streamed live on Facebook by Sean Reed from his phone as he was being chased by the police. In the video, which was watched by 4,000 people while it was happening, Reed tries to elude the pursuing officer, then parks and exits his vehicle and starts to run on foot. After a short distance, the officer apparently shoots Reed with a taser and the phone falls to the

ground. Next comes at least 13 gunshots.

Several minutes later, with Reed’s phone continuing to record, a police detective is heard making the comment, “Looks like it’s going to be a closed casket, homey,” while another individual laughs.

The IMPD was quick to present its version of the shooting, with spokesman Chris Bailey telling news media at the scene: “It is believed at this time that shots were fired by both the officer and the suspect. The suspect firing at the officer and then return fire by the officer... There is a gun near the suspect that does not belong to the officer. The suspect did have a gun over there.”

The officer was placed on administrative leave and the Marion County prosecutor, Ryan Mears, filed a motion Friday requesting an independent prosecutor for the investigation into the shooting. According to Mears, since IMPD Chief Randal Taylor is a witness in the investigation—Taylor was a participant in the initial high-speed vehicle chase—he would have a conflict of interest if he were involved in the investigation.

“We believe it is important that an independent prosecutor enter the process now to ensure that they can provide an outside review throughout the investigation,” Mears said.

The police shooting of Reed took place several hours before another incident in which 19-year-old McHale Rose was killed by police. According to IMPD Chief Taylor, Rose opened fire on police after he made a 911 call in what police say appeared to be an ambush of officers. Taylor also said it was not clear if the incident with Rose was related to the shooting of Reed.

In other developments within the Indianapolis police department, two officers were arrested on Friday, one on domestic battery and criminal confinement charges and the other on charges of official misconduct and

theft of a handgun.

The concern of government authorities over public anger in response to the police shootings was evident when Mayor Joe Hogsett said Friday that he had asked the US attorney's office and the FBI to "actively monitor" the investigations.



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