

Detroit Police SUV plows through protesters, several injured

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A police SUV plowed through a crowd of anti-police violence protesters in Detroit Sunday night, injuring several people.

The attack was caught on video, posted to social media, which shows protesters screaming as the vehicle pushed violently through the crowd, throwing people to the ground. The police officer driver braked and then accelerated repeatedly to throw protesters off his vehicle's bumper. The vehicle then took off at high speed with a man still on the hood.

Twenty-four-year-old protester Jae Bass told the *Detroit Free Press*, "He just floored it. He went super fast. We went flying off. He ran over a couple people's arms, feet."

Democratic Mayor Mike Duggan defended the officers involved in the attack, saying in an interview with WDET that Detroit police support the right to free speech. This comes less than a month after several journalists were physically harmed by police in Detroit in the first weekend of protests over the murder of George Floyd, getting pepper sprayed, arrested and shot by pepper balls and rubber bullets.

Detroit Police Chief James Craig also defended the officers involved, saying no immediate actions would be taken as "aggressors were targeting police." He claimed protesters were armed with hammers, and the police thought they were being fired upon.

This is countered by reports from people who were at the scene. A photographer with Detroit Will Breathe, one of the groups which organized the protest, told the WSWs the police were intimidating protesters throughout the night. The photographer was one of those struck by the police SUV.

"During that first stretch, some police officers were aggressive with their vehicles, ramming bikes that were helping us block traffic. While no one was injured, it

still made us nervous."

As the march continued, several police cruisers blocked their path. The crowd started walking around the police roadblock. The officers returned to their SUVs and tried moving through the crowd.

"It was then that said SUV began flooring it, and then slamming on his brakes repeatedly. At least ten protesters were plowed through... I didn't see anyone with hammers," the photographer noted.

This incident is the latest in a series of attacks by police using their vehicles as deadly weapons against protesters. On May 30 two NYPD SUVs drove through a crowd of protesters in Brooklyn. Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio defended the officers and blamed the protesters.

On June 1 a police SUV drove through a crowd in San Diego, California. In Richmond, Virginia, Police Chief Will Smith resigned after a police SUV drove through a crowd of protesters on June 13. Several people were struck but no one was injured.

There have also been at least 19 reports of civilians using vehicles as a weapon against protesters since the demonstrations began in May.

This is a direct result of rhetoric from Donald Trump and others defending and even encouraging the use of violence against peaceful protests. In a call to governors across the country, Trump said, "You have to dominate, or you'll look like a bunch of jerks." He called on them to seek "retribution" against the protesters, telling them not to "act too gingerly." Memes and jokes about murdering protesters with vehicles are common among the far-right on social media.

After the murder of Heather Heyer, a 32-year-old anti-fascist protester killed in 2017 when neo-Nazi James Fields drove through a crowd at a far-right rally in

Charlottesville, Virginia, Republican lawmakers in at least six states introduced laws that would protect motorists if they hit protesters blocking a roadway.

Meanwhile, Democratic mayors and governors across the country have called in the National Guard to violently put down protests in their cities and have defended the police, even when gratuitous scenes of violence against peaceful protesters are caught on video.

In the end, the increasing state violence against protesters is a result of the extreme inequality in the US and around the world. The ruling class, frightened by the unprecedented scale and multi-racial makeup of the demonstrations, is trying to quash the protests before it becomes a class-conscious movement against the entire capitalist system. As Trump warned in his call with US governors, “It’s a movement, if you don’t put it down it will get worse and worse.”



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