

As demonstrations erupt against Trump's use of federal paramilitary police in Portland

Protester shot and killed in Austin, Texas

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On Saturday night, a protester was shot and killed in Austin, Texas, as demonstrations erupted across the US in response to ongoing attacks on protesters in Portland by federal paramilitary police deployed by President Donald Trump. Protests against police violence were held in dozens of US cities over the weekend, including New York, Richmond, Omaha, Austin, Baltimore, Louisville, Denver, Seattle, Portland and Oakland.

Garrett Foster, 28, was shot and killed after a confrontation with a motorist who attempted to drive through the crowd during a Saturday night march in downtown Austin. Police have released scant details about a person who was detained in the shooting, questioned by authorities and released without being charged, according to Austin Police Chief Brian Manley.

A vigil was held for Foster in Austin Sunday evening. Foster, who is white, was marching with his quadriplegic fiancée Whitney Mitchell, who is black, when the pair were almost struck by a car.

The high school sweethearts had attended numerous protests in support of Black Lives Matter and against police violence over the past two months. In an interview with "Good Morning America," Sheila Foster, Garrett's mother, explained that Garrett was marching "because he feels really strongly about justice and he's very heavily against police brutality, and he wanted to support his fiancée."

Foster was legally carrying an AK-47 assault rifle at the time he was shot. No video has been released as of this writing that shows the exact moment the shooting occurred.

Social media video and eyewitness accounts confirm that a black car made an aggressive right turn through a crosswalk as protesters were marching down the street, nearly striking several people. As protesters surrounded the vehicle, five shots were heard, followed by screams

and another three gunshots.

Tony Plohetski, a senior reporter at Austin's ABC television affiliate KVUE, confirmed along with Austin police that two people discharged their weapons Saturday evening, neither of whom was Foster. Reporters for KVUE spoke with eyewitness and marcher Haven Trahan, who recalled seeing the vehicle "floor it" and turn right, heading "down the street at us." At that point, according to Trahan, Foster and other protesters confronted the vehicle.

"Garrett Foster died protecting us, not just the protesters, all of us. He was out here, day in and day out," Trahan said.

While there is inconsistent data, at least 25 people have been shot and killed since protests began nearly two months ago in response to the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. At least several of these homicides are known to have been carried out by right-wing, pro-Trump elements. This includes the killing of James Scurlock of Omaha, Nebraska, killed by a twice-deployed Marine veteran and ardent Trump supporter, Jacob Gardner.

In the two months since Floyd was murdered, millions of youth and workers in the US and around the world have participated in multi-racial and multi-ethnic protests demanding justice for victims of state violence. The Trump administration has used the demonstrations as a pretext to assert dictatorial authority and deploy federal agents in cities such as Portland, Seattle, Albuquerque, Milwaukee, Detroit and Chicago.

Protests in Portland and Seattle attracted thousands of people Saturday afternoon and into the evening. The protests remained peaceful throughout the day. However, once night fell, those assembled were declared "rioters" by police and forcibly dispersed with tear gas and rubber bullets.

In Portland, where at least 60 people have been arrested on federal charges since July 4, Democratic Mayor Ted Wheeler imposed an 8 p.m. curfew Saturday night. Wheeler himself was tear gassed Wednesday night by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC) paramilitaries when he attempted to address protesters, who roundly booed him. (CBP, as well as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), are part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The curfew was ignored by several thousand people who rallied outside of the Mark O. Hatfield federal courthouse in downtown Portland Saturday evening, chanting “Feds go home!”

As the BORTAC paramilitary lobbed CS gas from behind their barricades, “leaf-blower dads” wielding lawn maintenance equipment repelled the gas while a “wall of moms” stood between the protesters and the police. At about 1 a.m. Sunday morning, protesters managed to break through the steel fence surrounding the courthouse, prompting a vicious response from the federal forces, including tear gas and a fusillade of rubber bullets. Dave Killen, a photographer with the *Oregonian*, was struck in his midsection, ending his coverage of the protest for the evening.

The Freedom of the Press Foundation (FOP), which tracks assaults on journalists, released a report on July 24 stating that in Portland over the preceding eight days, “at least 30 journalists... have allegedly been attacked by DHS agents.” The attacks included physical assault, pepper spray, tear gas and being hit by a projectile. FOP research concluded there were 19 cases of DHS agents shooting journalists, including two reports of journalists being targeted in the head with “less lethal” ammunition.

So far, the FOP has documented 550 incidents of press freedom violations within the last two months. This is nearly quadruple what the FOP reported for all of 2019. FOP notes that a vast majority of the assaults have been committed by local police forces. However, “since DHS troops invaded Portland last week, the federal government has been responsible for almost all of the new reports.”

In Seattle, Saturday’s protests were declared a “riot” after demonstrators broke through a fence where a youth prison is being expanded and set fire to five portable construction trailers. Elected officials have for years ignored community calls to close the King County Children and Family Justice Center. Seattle police reported arresting at least 25 people in connection with the protests.

Trump has deployed DHS tactical squads to Seattle on a “standby” basis.

In Aurora, Colorado, a suburb of Denver, two people were sent to the hospital in serious condition Saturday evening after a Jeep drove through a large crowd of demonstrators. Protesters had gathered to march for 23-year-old Elijah McClain, murdered by Aurora police last November.

Over 1,000 people were assembled on Interstate 225 demanding “Justice for Elijah,” when a blue Jeep sped through the march, sending hundreds running and screaming. Multiple shots were fired at the Jeep by one of the protesters. The shots ended up striking two other protesters, grazing one and sending the other to the hospital.

No charges have been announced against the driver of the Jeep. The mayor of Aurora, Republican Mike Coffman, issued a statement on Facebook Sunday morning declaring that “Aurora cannot become a Portland.” The statement made no mention of the attempted vehicular manslaughter, but instead focused on property damage to the courthouse and branded the protesters “domestic terrorists.”

On Saturday evening, over 100 protesters in Omaha, Nebraska, marched in solidarity with Portland protesters and carried signs demanding justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and James Scurlock, all victims of police killings. The protest came to quick end, however, after police arrived and arrested dozens of people.

Speaking to NBC’s local station WOWT in Omaha, Jordan Corbin, who was arrested and released on bond Sunday afternoon, said the protests were peaceful until the police showed up. “They pulled up to the bridge and said we were under arrest for unlawful assembly and blocked us in from both ends,” Corbin stated. He and several other protesters were kept in an overcrowded cell for over 14 hours with no knowledge of when they might be released.

By Sunday afternoon over 100 protesters had gathered outside Douglas County Corrections in Omaha to demand the release of their comrades. Corrections officials blamed a “technical error” for preventing the protesters from being released, even after bail was posted Sunday evening.



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