

Louisville police chief declares “state of emergency” in advance of state’s decision on charges against policemen who killed Breonna Taylor

Kevin Reed
22 September 2020

The chief of the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) has issued a special order declaring a state of emergency in preparation for an imminent announcement from Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron on whether or not criminal charges will be brought against the police officers who killed Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American emergency medical technician, in her home six months ago.

Interim Chief of LMPD Robert Schroeder sent a memo to all department personnel on Monday stating that requests for vacations and days off were being cancelled until further notice. “In anticipation of Attorney General Cameron’s announcement in the Breonna Taylor case, I am declaring a state of emergency for the Louisville Metro Police Department,” Schroeder wrote in his memo.

Chief Schroeder also said that to “ensure we have the appropriate level of staffing to provide for public safety services and our policing functions,” LMPD will operate under the emergency staffing and reporting guidelines outlined in the city’s Emergency Response Plan. This plan contains a lengthy section on “Civil Disturbances/Disorderly Crowds” that was updated on Monday.

In addition to the LMPD staffing requirements, Sgt. Lamont Washington reported in a news release, “The public may also see barriers being staged around downtown, which is another part of our preparations.”

Attorney General Cameron is expected this week to present before a grand jury the findings of the months’ long investigation into the brutal police killing of Taylor on March 13, 2020. Taylor was shot eight times

and bled to death on the floor of her apartment during a “no-knock” search warrant raid carried out by three plainclothes LMPD officers.

Taylor was asleep with her boyfriend Kenneth Walker shortly after midnight when the officers battered down her apartment door without announcing themselves as part of a drug-related investigation involving the young woman’s former boyfriend Jamarus Glover. Thinking that the apartment was being broken into by intruders, Walker fired his handgun at the officers and struck one of them in the leg.

Federal police agencies have been requested by U.S. Attorney Russell Coleman to provide protection for the courthouse and three other buildings in downtown Louisville in anticipation of Cameron’s announcement. A federal judge signed an order to shut down historic Gene Snyder U.S. Courthouse and Custom House for the week, and the windows of the buildings were being boarded up on Monday.

Also on Monday, LMPD reported that six officers are under investigation by the department’s Professional Standards Unit for their roles in Taylor’s killing. Detective Myles Cosgrove and Sgt. Jonathan Mattingly, who fired their weapons at Taylor’s apartment, are under investigation along with Detective Joshua Jaynes, who swore out the affidavit to get the search warrant.

Detectives Tony James, Michael Campbell and Michael Nobles are also being investigated for their roles in the events of March 13. Officer Brett Hankinson, who discharged his gun 10 times into

Taylor's apartment was fired on June 23 for "wantonly and blindly" using his weapon.

The announcement of the internal investigation six months after Taylor's death is further proof that the LMPD had intended to sweep the killing of the young woman under the rug. In fact, the initial police incident report, which was released to the public in June, said that there was no forced entry into Breonna's apartment, and it also documented her bodily injuries as "None."

The fight to establish the truth about Breonna Taylor's death was conducted initially by her family and friends and then, especially after George Floyd was choked to death by the Minneapolis Police on Memorial Day two and half months later, protests against police violence across the country began demanding "Justice for Breonna."

Nightly mass protests throughout the summer in Louisville were attacked by police and National Guard troops who fired on demonstrators with tear gas and live ammunition. Restaurant owner David McAtee was shot and killed in the doorway of his business by the National Guard in Louisville during protests on June 1. No official investigation has been conducted into this killing, and the shooter of McAtee has not been named.

There has been speculation that Attorney General Cameron's decision will be to decline to pursue criminal charges against the officers. Local criminal defense attorneys told the *Courier Journal* that a homicide charge is unlikely because Kentucky's self-defense law allows police to use deadly force if their lives are in danger, and Taylor's boyfriend fired on the officers.

The news about an announcement from state authorities comes less than one week after the Louisville city government settled a wrongful death lawsuit with Taylor's family for \$12 million. The agreement—which does not require the city to admit wrongdoing—also included a raft of promises about "policing changes."

Among the proposals offered were a requirement that commanding officers review and approve in writing all search warrants and that there be an "early warning" system to flag officers with "disciplinary problems," such as Hankinson who had multiple complaints filed against him for excessive use of force prior to Taylor's death. According to records released to the media, the

prior complaints were either dismissed or deemed "not credible."

Protests demanding justice for the family of Breonna Taylor are likely regardless of Cameron's decision this week, especially if no charges are brought or if the charges are seen as insufficient. The preparations of local and federal police agencies for a state of emergency in Louisville make clear that the authoritarian measures that were introduced in Portland in an effort to suppress the ongoing movement against police brutality and violence are being expanded across the country.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact