

Breonna Taylor police murder grand jury proceedings released by Kentucky court

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2 October 2020

The Jefferson County Circuit Court in Louisville, Kentucky, released audio recordings Friday of the grand jury proceedings relating to the killing of 26-year-old African American emergency medical technician Breonna Taylor.

This came after an unidentified juror disputed Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron's explanation last month for why none of the officers were charged over Taylor's murder earlier this year. Both the juror's decision to speak out publicly and the exposure of the grand jury are unprecedented and extraordinary developments.

The juror in question came forward less than one week ago to accuse Cameron of misleading the public about the grand jury's deliberations. The juror filed a formal motion on Monday asking Jefferson Circuit Judge Ann Bailey Smith to allow fellow jurors to give up their confidential status if they wish and to speak freely about the proceedings, which are typically kept private.

The juror's filing earlier this week stated that "the full story and absolute truth of how this matter was handled from beginning to end is now an issue of great public interest and has become a large part of the discussion of public trust throughout the country."

Judge Smith directed prosecutors to file the recordings during an arraignment hearing Monday for Brett Hankison, the former Louisville police detective who was indicted for shooting into neighboring apartments the night Taylor was shot and killed.

Just ahead of a noon deadline, Cameron's office released a redacted version of the recording in 14 different audio files. The redacted audio comprises approximately three minutes and 50 seconds out of approximately 20 hours of recordings.

"I'm confident," Cameron stated, "that once the

public listens to the recordings, they will see that our team presented a thorough case to the Jefferson County Grand Jury. Our presentation followed the facts and the evidence, and the Grand Jury was given a complete picture of the events surrounding Ms. Taylor's death on March 13."

The Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) used a narcotics warrant to enter Taylor's apartment on March 13 where they shot her after her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, fired a gun at them one time. Taylor was shot a total of five times. The police never found any drugs in the apartment.

The audio includes officers' testimony that they knocked on Taylor's door multiple times and announced their police presence before entering, which contradicts the story given by Walker. Walker previously stated that the officers bashed down the door with a battering ram unannounced, which was what prompted him to fire his warning shot at them in self-defense and that he never would have fired if he knew they were police.

The LMPD maintains that none of the officers involved in the shooting wore body cameras, though body camera footage from other officers who responded to the shooting has since been released. That footage corroborates Walker's statements that he was threatened by the police and shows violations of department protocol.

One audio recording comes from an interview on March 13, the day of the killing, from Lt. Shawn Hoover: "We knocked on the door, waited, I don't know, 10 or 15 seconds. Knocked again, waited even longer." The majority of residents of the building report that they did not hear any such warning from the officers.

Another recording features a law enforcement officer

testifying that the police ultimately never executed the warrant to search Taylor's apartment. "Were drugs or paraphernalia recovered from apartment 4? ... The answer to that is no. They didn't go forward with executing the initial search warrant they had for Breonna Taylor's apartment."

Details are still emerging as journalists study the new audio recordings, but at least one interview has already come under public scrutiny at the time of this writing: a neighbor told the FBI that he heard three rounds of shots and that the last one sounded like an automatic rifle. The same neighbor stated that he saw an officer holding a 9mm Glock, which is the type of weapon that was fired into the leg of Sgt. Jonathan Mattingly. Cameron has previously claimed that the police officers do not carry 9mm weapons.

The grand jury charged Officer Brett Hankison, who was previously fired, with three counts of wanton endangerment for shooting into a neighboring apartment, where no one was hit. He has pleaded not guilty, and Cameron has stated that there is no conclusive evidence that any of his shots hit Taylor.

Cameron argued in his press conference announcing the grand jury's decision that Mattingly, who fired his weapon six times, and Detective Myles Cosgrove, who fired 16 shots, including the fatal shot that struck Taylor in the head, were protected by Kentucky law.

"While there are six possible homicide charges under Kentucky law," Cameron stated, "these charges are not applicable to the facts before us because our investigation showed, and the Grand Jury agreed, that Mattingly and Cosgrove were justified" in firing their guns.

To date, none of the officers has been indicted on charges directly related to Taylor's death. Walker, meanwhile, who fired a defensive warning shot when the door was busted down, was initially charged with attempted murder.

As the WSWS explained earlier this week, the whitewashing of the police killing of Breonna Taylor is part of a politically orchestrated attempt to stifle the mass protests that have erupted against police violence since the spring.

Protesters have again taken to the streets in recent days to demand more accountability in the case. Activists, Taylor's family, and the unidentified juror had all called for the grand jury file to be released.

Last week, Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, wrote in a statement that was read aloud at a press conference, that "I have no faith in the legal system, in the police, in the law."

Speaking of Cameron, who is African American and a rising star in the Republican Party, she wrote, "What I had hoped is that he knew he had the power to do the right thing, that he had the power to start the healing of this city." She concluded, "What he helped me realize is that it will always be us against them, that we are never safe when it comes to them."

In addition to the State of Kentucky's case against Hankison, the FBI is still reportedly investigating the police shooting.



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