

# Protests erupt in Vancouver, Washington after police murder of 21-year-old Kevin Peterson, Jr.

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3 November 2020

Three consecutive nights of anti-police violence protests with up to 300 participants broke out Friday night after police killed 21-year-old black man Kevin Peterson, Jr. in Vancouver, Washington, a northern suburb of Portland, Oregon. The protests became a target of far-right forces, including Patriot Prayer.

Peterson was shot and killed by three unnamed police officers from the Clark County Sheriff's Department, who were joined by officers from the Regional Drug Task Force. They were responding to reports that someone was selling drugs in the parking lot of a US Bank on Thursday evening.

According to Clark County Sheriff Chuck Atkins, Peterson got out of his car and ran away when approached by officers, who claim that he held a pistol in his hand. Atkins went on to indicate that he was still gathering information and that "the information I have, is that upon entering the parking lot of the bank, the man repeatedly, reportedly fired his weapon at the deputies. The deputies returned fire and the subject was tragically killed. It is my understanding that the man's firearm was observed at the scene."

Clark County officers do not wear body cameras, and there are no videos or independent witness accounts of the events. The three unnamed officers are on paid administrative leave while an investigation is being carried out by Southwest Washington Independent Investigative Response Team (SWIIRT), comprised of a variety of regional law enforcement agencies and a minimum of two "non-law enforcement community members" who will review the findings.

The girlfriend of Kevin Peterson Jr., who recently gave birth to their daughter, declared on Monday that his family has hired an attorney to carry out a legal

battle for answers around the murky case.

Approximately 300 mourners and protesters gathered on Friday in the span of 15 minutes, congregating for a somber candlelight vigil in Esther Short Park to mourn the death of yet another young man at the hands of the police.

Extreme right-wing protesters supporting Donald Trump arrived at the scene later in the evening, inciting tense clashes with the anti-police violence demonstrators. Some witnesses told local news agencies that they heard gunshots coming from the right-wing groups. A Trump supporter also drove a truck into the area at high speeds, in an open threat to run protesters over.

Police arrested seven individuals Friday night, most of them left-wing protesters for petty crime like vandalism. Another six were arrested on Saturday, when clashes erupted in downtown Vancouver after Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson called on his members to stage a provocative demonstration.

The protests and far-right actions in Vancouver came after months of nationwide and international multi-racial demonstrations sparked by the brutal murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, as well as just days before the US presidential elections. Trump openly incited his fascistic supporters to carry out violence, including asking the Proud Boys to "stand by" for the elections at the first debate with Biden.

Significantly, neighboring Portland has been a hotspot for anti-police violence protests and clashes between left-wing demonstrators and the far-right. Protests were organized for more than 100 consecutive days after the murder of George Floyd, even after Trump sent federal agents to terrorize demonstrators

and the local Democratic politicians mobilized police to crack down on “violent left-wing extremists.”

Portland was also the site of the August 29 killing of a Trump supporter by left-wing protester Michael Reinoehl, who was subsequently executed by police in Washington state with the full support of Donald Trump and the White House.

The enormous and rapid response to the Vancouver police killing is an indication of the massive opposition to police violence which continues to prevail among workers and young people.

However, despite the unprecedented scale and scope of protests this year, police violence has continued unabated. According to the latest information, 809 people have been killed by police in the United States so far this year, on track to meet or even surpass the average of 1,000 people killed every year.

While African Americans and other minority populations confront disproportionate rates of imprisonment and police murder, associated with higher rates of poverty, poor and working-class people of all ethnic backgrounds face common treatment by the armed agents of the capitalist state.

The Vancouver protests also express extreme social tensions that will burst into the open regardless of whether Trump or Biden sits in the White House. Popular opposition against inequality, police brutality and the authoritarian plots of Donald Trump can only find a way forward through the building of an independent socialist movement of the working class directed against the entire political establishment and capitalist system.



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