

Democratic governor declares state of emergency, imposes curfew

Protests erupt following police killing in Minneapolis suburb

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Protests continued for a second day Monday over the police murder of Daunte Wright in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, suburb of Brooklyn Center. Demonstrations began not long after word spread of the killing Sunday, with protesters demanding an end to police brutality confronted by officers in full riot gear who fired tear gas, flash bangs and rubber bullets into the crowd.

Minnesota's Democratic Governor Tim Walz responded to the protests by deploying the National Guard and declaring a state of emergency. Approximately 2.4 million people in the four Minnesota counties encompassing the Minneapolis–St. Paul region were placed under curfew from 7 p.m. Monday through 6 a.m. Tuesday.

On Sunday afternoon, shortly after 1:30 p.m., long-time Brooklyn Center Police Department officer Kimberly Potter, 48, shot and killed the 20-year-old father during a traffic stop. The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension confirmed that Potter is also the president of the Brooklyn Center Police Union. Potter is white and Wright was black.

In a contentious Monday morning press conference, Brooklyn Center Police Chief Tim Gannon stated that Wright had been pulled over because of an expired registration tag. During the traffic stop, Gannon alleges officers discovered a warrant for Wright and attempted to arrest him.

In the just over one-minute body cam video released by the police at the press conference, Wright's vehicle is observed along with two other male cops, one on the driver's side, the other the passenger's. Wright is told to exit the vehicle, which he does. As Wright has his back turned to the police, with one cop attempting to put him in handcuffs, Potter reaches for and grabs one

of Wright's arms. Wright reacts by slipping out of the grip of the police and then sitting back down in the driver's seat of his car.

At this point Potter pulls out her pistol and points it at Wright for at least five seconds. As she is pointing her gun at Wright, she states, "I will tase you," followed by the words, "Taser! Taser! Taser!" at which point she discharges her firearm, shooting Wright once.

"Holy shit, I just shot him!" Potter exclaimed. This statement coupled with the video footage led Gannon to characterize the shooting as an "accidental discharge."

After Wright was shot, the vehicle lurched forward for a short distance before crashing into a parked car. Wright's girlfriend, who was in the car throughout the entire episode was injured during the accident.

Police and government officials had refused to name Potter for more than 24 hours after the killing. She was first identified Monday evening by the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* based on two law enforcement sources with "direct knowledge" of the case. Potter has been placed on administrative leave pending the investigation into Wright's death.

During a Sunday evening protest, an estimated 500 protesters marched through the streets of Brooklyn Center to the police station to protest the killing and subsequent treatment of Wright, whose body witnesses and Wright's parents say was left in the street for five hours after he was slain.

Protesters were met by militarized police dressed head to toe in riot gear who proceeded to fire on protesters after an "unlawful assembly" was declared. Multiple protesters were bloodied by foam baton rounds requiring medical attention.

By Monday morning, more than 100 riot police and

National Guard soldiers were stationed outside the Brooklyn Center police department. In an afternoon press conference, Walz said he expected to muster “the largest police presence” in the history of Minnesota to suppress protests.

Brooklyn Center Police Chief Gannon was asked multiple times Monday morning why police were so heavy-handed in their response, noting that a majority of the protesters were peaceful. Reporters and community activists pointed out that police had fired dozens of canisters of cs-gas and flashbangs past the crowd and into nearby residential apartment complexes.

Gannon said police were simply “returning fire” and that he would not change anything about how the police interacted with protesters.

On Monday evening, a vigil organized in Wright’s memory drew thousands of people. At the time of this writing, police had decreed that those at the vigil were violating the 7 p.m. curfew and subject to arrest.

Brooklyn Center is a northwest suburb bordering Minneapolis with over 30,000 residents. Wright’s killing and the protests come as the third week of the murder trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin is under way just a few miles away. It is less than a year after Chauvin murdered George Floyd, sparking international protests against police violence.

The government center in downtown Minneapolis, where the trial is currently taking place, has been fortified with concrete barriers and razor wire, and the National Guard has been manning checkpoints, on stand-by to respond to protests.

Demonstrating that the Democratic Party, no less than the Republican, is dedicated to persevering and upholding the right of the police to kill with impunity, in brief comments made Monday at the White House, President Joe Biden unequivocally backed the police and warned protesters against “looting and violence.”

“I haven’t called Daunte Wright’s family,” Biden said, before offering his “prayers” and noting that it was “a really tragic thing that happened.”

Biden cautioned that “we have got to wait and see what the investigation shows.” Then, pausing for effect, he attacked protesters, stating, “I want to make it clear again: There is absolutely no justification, none, for looting, no justification for violence.”

An analysis by Stephen Semler of *Security Reform.org* found that in the first quarter of 2021 the

Biden administration, through the notorious 1033 Program, had transferred \$33,506,765 worth of military equipment to police departments throughout the country.

Despite the fact that Minnesota politics is dominated by the Democratic Party, the epidemic of unaccountable police murder continues throughout the state. In the first week of the year, Minneapolis police killed Somali-American immigrant Dolal Idd and then subsequently terrorized his family in Eden Prairie.

The killing of Wright comes less than two weeks after Chicago police executed 13-year-old Adam Toledo. Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot is working with the police to smear the young child and his family while delaying the release of damning police bodycam footage. In fewer than 103 days, *mappingpoliceviolence.org* has recorded 268 killings by US police so far this year, or nearly three killings per day.



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