

As Chauvin trial continues in Minneapolis

Brooklyn Center, Minnesota police officer charged in killing of Daunte Wright

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After three consecutive nights of protest, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota police Officer Kim Potter was arrested and charged with second-degree manslaughter in Sunday's fatal shooting of a 20-year-old black man.

Potter had resigned from the force on Tuesday after initially being placed on administrative leave. Police claim that Potter, who is white, accidentally shot Daunte Wright during a traffic stop in the Minneapolis suburb when she mistook her firearm for her taser.

During a press conference, police claimed that Wright had been pulled over because of an expired registration tag, and officers attempted to arrest him after discovering Wright had a misdemeanor warrant. Body cam footage showed Potter pulling out her pistol after Wright slipped out of her grip when another officer was trying to handcuff him.

Wright was sitting in the driver's seat of his car when Potter verbally threatened to tase him. Within seconds, Potter discharged her firearm, striking Wright in the chest and killing him. It is unclear what led to Potter allegedly mistaking her gun for her taser. However, Potter had no justification for using deadly force against Wright, and the use of a taser in the situation was dangerous.

Protests began in Brooklyn Center shortly after Wright was murdered Sunday afternoon, before spreading to other cities in the Twin Cities area and across the country. Minneapolis, St. Paul, Brooklyn Center and other surrounding cities implemented curfews Monday and Tuesday nights as hundreds marched through the streets. Police in Minnesota reported 79 arrests Tuesday night.

Police clashed with protesters in Brooklyn Center after protesters gathered outside of the local police

headquarters Tuesday night. In the past few days, police have fortified the perimeter with concrete barriers and chain-link fencing.

Protesters chanted and demanded justice as police in riot gear and National Guard soldiers stood watch. About 90 minutes before the 10:00 p.m. curfew, police declared that the gathering was unlawful and ordered the crowd to disperse. Officers claimed they ordered protesters to disperse because they were launching fireworks and trying to take down the fencing.

The situation escalated, and police fired with flashbangs and tear gas. Riot police advanced in a line and pushed protesters back, once again demanding they leave the area. At one point, officers ordered that journalists leave the scene or face arrest.

CNN reporter Sara Sidner, who attended Tuesday's Brooklyn Center demonstrations, expressed her shock, tweeting: "In my 25 years as a reporter I have NEVER heard police in America actually say 'journalists will be arrested' during protests. But that happened in #BrooklynCenter last night."

Around 9:30 p.m., police began arresting protesters. A journalist from Status Coup News said police "created a warzone-like state" during the arrests. A video taken at the scene shows dozens of officers surrounding three people in a car and shouting for them to exit the vehicle. One officer suggested slashing the vehicle's tires.

Ten miles away from Brooklyn Center, the trial of former Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd is currently in its third week.

On Tuesday Chauvin's defense team began calling its first witnesses after the prosecution rested its case. Throughout the trial, defense attorney Eric Nelson has

maintained that Floyd died because of drug use and an underlying heart condition. Additionally, Nelson has argued that officers were “distracted” by protesters, who shouted at Chauvin and his partners pinned Floyd to the pavement.

The defense called use-of-force expert Barry Brodd, who said the force officers used against Floyd was “objectively reasonable,” adding that Chauvin acted with “reasonableness.” Furthermore, Brodd testified that he did not consider officers putting a suspect in a prone position to be a use of force. In 2018, Brodd also testified that former Officer Jason Van Dyke was justified in his use of force in the fatal shooting of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald by a Chicago police officer in 2014.

Dr. David Fowler, a retired forensic pathologist, was called to supplement the argument that Floyd died from “sudden cardiac arrhythmia” related to underlying health issues and fentanyl and methamphetamine ingestion. Currently Fowler faces a federal civil lawsuit after ruling the death of 19-year-old Anton Black an accident after he was killed by police in 2018.

“There’s multiple entities all acting together and adding to each other and taking away from a different part of the ability to give oxygen into his heart,” Fowler said. “At some point, the heart exhausted its reserves of metabolic supply and went into an arrhythmia and stopped pumping blood effectively.”

Fowler claimed that Chauvin’s knee was not obstructing Floyd’s airway or carotid artery, saying it was “nowhere close.” He testified that the fact that Floyd was speaking and making noise was “very good evidence the airway was not closed.”

Under cross-examination, Fowler agreed with prosecutor Jerry Blackwell that Floyd died long before he arrived at the hospital. He also agreed that officers should have given Floyd immediate medical attention, stating that he was “critical” about officers not assisting Floyd.

“Immediate medical attention for a person who has gone into cardiac arrest, may well reverse that process,” Fowler said.

He also noted that Floyd could have died from carbon monoxide poisoning because he was pinned directly next to the exhaust pipe of the running police vehicle. He explained to jurors that as carbon monoxide intake goes up, a person’s oxygen-carrying capacity goes

down. Furthermore, people with heart conditions are more adversely affected and die at lower levels of carbon monoxide poisoning than healthy people.

Multiple Minneapolis police officers, including Police Chief Medaria Arradondo, have testified for the prosecution seeking to distance the department from Chauvin, depicting him as someone outside of what the police stand for. They are seeking to reinforce the argument that police brutality is the result of a few “bad apples” in an otherwise innocent profession.

However, police are not “peacekeepers.” They function as armed enforcers of the state with the purpose of protecting the rights and privileges of the ruling elites.

This social function requires the violent repression of the working class, with police killing an average of three people every day in the US.



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