

Thousands protest police killing of 13-year-old Adam Toledo

Trévon Austin
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Chicago residents reacted with outrage and grief to newly-released bodycam footage showing police officer Eric Stillman fatally shooting thirteen-year-old Adam Toledo after a brief foot chase as the boy turned and faced the officer with his hands in the air.

Stillman and other officers were responding to reports of shots fired in Little Village, a predominantly Hispanic, working-class neighborhood in Chicago's southwest side, at around 3 a.m. on March 29. Stillman confronted Toledo and 21-year-old Ruben Roman before chasing Toledo on foot into an alley.

Stillman yelled at Toledo to stop and to drop a gun he had in his hand. The teenager slowed down before dropping the gun and turning with his empty hands raised. In less than a second Stillman opened fire, striking Toledo in the chest. Nineteen seconds elapsed from when the officer got out of his squad car to when he shot the boy.

Dozens of protestors marched in Chicago just hours after the video was released. Local news stations reported a demonstration in downtown Chicago and a later one right outside the Chicago Police Department headquarters. Protestors were reported to have blocked traffic but remained peaceful.

A larger protest was held Friday night in Logan Square, near the home of Mayor Lori Lightfoot. More than 2,000 people said they would attend the event or were interested in doing so on Facebook, with videos of the demonstration already showing that thousands of people had gathered in the streets. Police were expected to block off Lightfoot's home with barricades and officers.

Lightfoot, a Democrat, appealed for calm and defended Stillman at a Thursday news conference, saying anyone who saw footage of the incident would "see that officer spring into action to try to revive

Adam, to call for medical assistance." Lightfoot claimed most officers go their entire career without shooting their weapon and added that officers are traumatized whenever they do shoot someone.

Although protestors have declared they will remain peaceful, police have preemptively made preparations for violent confrontations. Officers were deployed throughout the downtown area and city vehicles were set aside to be used to block traffic if necessary. Business owners boarded up windows and barricaded stores in anticipation of violence.

According to news site Block Club Chicago, police began preparations for protests as early as Monday, stating it was "closely monitoring events across the country," one day after the police murder of Daunte Wright sparked protests in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. That day, some officers had their days off canceled, and police presence was heavy throughout the city. Officers sat in their cars with their flashing lights on and closed off Oak Street, an affluent commercial area, to drivers.

The footage of Toledo's murder adds to the outrage among the American population over police violence and brutality. The video was released amid the ongoing trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who knelt on George Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes on May 25, 2020, and the recent killing of Wright in a Minneapolis suburb.

Wright was pulled over by police who said they later discovered he had a warrant for his arrest for a misdemeanor weapons charge. While he was being arrested, Wright pulled away from officers and attempted to sit down in his driver's seat. Potter pulled her pistol on Wright, which she allegedly mistook for her taser, and shot him seconds later. Wright died at the scene. Potter was charged with second-degree

manslaughter on Wednesday.

For five nights in a row, sometimes in snowy weather, protestors marched in Brooklyn Center. Protestors chanted Wright's name and demanded justice outside the Brooklyn Center Police Department. The first three nights of protests were marked by violence and chaos, as police deployed tear gas on protestors and made dozens of arrests. The National Guard was deployed to back up the police. Officers threatened to arrest journalists during the protests, openly stating that they would be arrested if they did not leave the area.

Police reported 72 people were arrested on Tuesday and another 24 on Wednesday. Protestors returned Thursday but no arrests were made. However, police said they will remain alert and prepare for demonstrations to continue as the trial of Derek Chauvin approaches its final stages next week.



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