

Protests continue in Minneapolis after US Marshals task force fatally shoots man

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Protests in uptown Minneapolis continued for a fourth night Sunday after the fatal shooting of a man in a public parking garage last Thursday.

Members of a federal US Marshal Service (USMS) Fugitive Task Force shot and killed 32-year-old Winston Boogie Smith after surrounding his car on the evening of June 3. USMS initially claimed that Smith was wanted for murder, but retracted the accusations, now saying that they were trying to arrest him for allegedly being a felon in possession of a firearm.

By the time USMS had retracted their initial statements, multiple headlines and articles from local news had already published the initial claims that Smith was a murder suspect, without naming any incident or victims.

Additionally, USMS officers claimed that Smith had been armed and fired shots at the officers. USMS claims to have found a handgun with a spent shell. A 27-year-old woman, who was Smith's passenger in his car, was also wounded in the shooting.

Protesters, including Smith's brother, immediately gathered and demanded the release of any video and evidence or eyewitnesses to come forward. The parking ramp can be seen from the windows of several apartment complexes.

Skeptical of the maneuvering of USMS and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), Kidale Smith, Winston's brother, told WCCO Channel 4, "You cannot hide. You can't hide anymore, claiming that you're US Marshals, the BCA, and that you can't release evidence. You won't be able to hide for long."

Kidale Smith pleaded with those who live in nearby apartment buildings to come forward, "Somebody has seen something, and I know you did—there are too many windows over here and there are too many people in the restaurants." He said, "Somebody saw something, and

somebody heard something," Smith said, adding that he is also interested in footage from a security camera on the fifth floor of the parking garage where Winston was shot.

Waylon Hughes, a close friend of Smith for over 10 years, told reporters that he didn't know Smith to carry a gun, and that he did not know that Smith owned one.

The BCA says there is no video from body cameras or squad car videos because the US Marshal Service does not allow the use of body cameras for its North Star Fugitive Task Force, which was involved in the killing of Smith. However, according to the US Attorney's office for the district of Minnesota, this policy changed last year, and beginning in February this year, officers should have begun using body cams.

Smith's fatal shooting bears a resemblance to the assassination of Michael Reinhoehl in September last year when a US Marshals federal task force surrounded him and opened fire without warning or trying to arrest him. President Donald Trump bragged about having ordered the execution of a US citizen, saying "We sent in the US Marshals, took 15 minutes and it was over. ..." Police claim that Reinhoehl opened fire with a single shot, necessitating a hail of 40 bullets.

The police killing of Smith came less than a week after police in Milwaukee, Wisconsin shot and killed 49-year-old Roberto Zielinski, a father to six, on May 30.

Police killed Zielinski after alleging he fired shots from a porch of a home and did not drop his gun after being told to. "The stress and the emotions that my family has right now is at an all-time high," Jacob Gonzalez, Zielinski's nephew told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "We all just really looked at each other and said ... we've got to know what's going on because I can't think my uncle would do anything like

this.” The family and their supporters are demanding the release of body cam footage.

Both killings, the latest in the unending string of violence meted out by police, expose the reality of class relations in the United States. Under capitalism, the working class is subjugated to the dictates of the ruling class, enforced violently by the police and the state which employs them. That both victims were killed in cities run by Democratic Party administrations underscores the bipartisan support for the police, whose crimes overwhelmingly go unpunished.

Appeals made to the ruling class and to capitalist parties like the Democrats and Republicans for police reform will fall on deaf ears. Over a year since the murder of George Floyd, which sparked mass international, multiracial and multiethnic protests across the US and around the world, police violence has not stopped. According to mappingpoliceviolence.org, police have killed 439 people in the US this year. An end to police brutality can only come through the overturn of the capitalist system and the establishment of socialism.



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