

Protests erupt after Minneapolis police kill man in no-knock raid

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Amir Locke, 22, was killed Wednesday by the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) as they carried out an early morning no-knock raid. Locke was shot by Mark Hanneman, a SWAT officer with the MPD, while he was sleeping on the couch at a family member's apartment on the 7th floor. Hanneman opened fire less than 10 seconds after police burst into the apartment.

MPD released statements immediately after the shooting claiming that they were assisting the St. Paul Police Department in executing a search warrant for a homicide suspect. The initial claim by Interim Minneapolis Police Chief Amelia Huffman was that the officers "loudly and repeatedly" announced their entry into an apartment.

The statement was followed by a press release in the afternoon claiming the following: "Approximately nine seconds into the entry, officers encountered a male who was armed with a handgun pointed in the direction of officers. At one point, shots were fired, and the adult male suspect was struck. Officers immediately provided emergency aid and carried the suspect down to the lobby to meet paramedics."

The released body camera footage, however, illustrates a completely different reality.

Officers entered unannounced with key fobs they obtained from the building by unlocking the door and loudly rushing into the apartment with weapons drawn, contradicting the initial statements of the MPD. The footage shows a stunned Locke startled awake from his sleep on the couch and multiple shots being immediately fired at him by Hanneman. The video demonstrates that while Locke may have had a firearm, he did not point it in the direction of officers.

Initial press releases also claimed Locke was a suspect in a homicide investigation which was being led by the St. Paul Police Department. He was in fact

not related to any homicide case, and he had no criminal record. Notably, Huffman made sure to repeat the claims that he was a suspect for homicide multiple times in her initial press statements. This same strategy was used to spread misinformation about previous police murder cases, such as the shooting of Winston Smith in 2021.

Immediately after the bodycam footage was released, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey held a press conference Thursday afternoon with Huffman where he engaged in damage control for the initial police efforts to downplay and whitewash Locke's murder. Lawyer Nekima Levy Armstrong was also invited to take the floor with Frey. Levy Armstrong is a consultant and pseudo-left activist who helped organize "Black Lives Matter" protests in Minneapolis over the previous years. Last year, Frey seated Armstrong on a public safety commission which was intended to advise the mayor on how to expand policing to become "safer."

At the press conference, Frey first announced that the city would be placing a moratorium on no-knock warrants like the one that killed Locke and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2020. Huffman was confronted about her initial press release by several reporters, and in response she presented the same claims from the initial press release. However, she tailored them to appear as if they were what the initial report stated. She claimed that the police opening the door and entering while shouting "Police, search warrant" is the same as "loudly and repeatedly" announcing themselves, as claimed by the MPD.

When questioned on the fact that the footage shows Locke did not have his gun pointed at Hanneman, Huffman claimed that the officer was out of frame. At this point, the press conference collapsed entirely when Levy Armstrong interrupted Huffman and Frey to

confront them about their attempts to cover up the murder of Locke. “This is the anatomy of a cover up,” she exclaimed as she approached the floor.

According to independent reporting, at least three apartments were also raided in the same building during the operation that killed Locke.

Protests erupted in Minneapolis for multiple nights following Locke’s killing. On Friday, Democratic Governor Tim Walz responded to the protests by activating the National Guard in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

On Saturday, over 1,000 protesters marched through the city and gathered outside of the government center building in the sub-freezing temperatures. Andre Locke, Amir’s father, attended the protests and spoke on Saturday, “When they put the narrative out there that he was a murderer, I couldn’t. I couldn’t.” He continued, emotionally, “He was responsible, he didn’t deserve to have his life taken from him the way that it was. Why couldn’t my son bury me? Why couldn’t my son live to see his 40th birthday?”

Locke was planning to move to Dallas, Texas, this week to be closer to his mother, Karen Wells, and to begin his career as a musician, following in the footsteps of his father. He had already designed a logo for his business and constructed a plan.

Locke’s murder occurs just as the trials for Thomas Lane, Tou Thao and J. Alexander Kueng for their role in the 2020 murder of George Floyd conclude. Derek Chauvin, former MPD officer, was filmed kneeling on Floyd’s neck while Thao, Kueng, and Lane helped detain Floyd and prevented onlookers from intervening. Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter at trial in April 2021. Kimberly Potter’s trial for the murder of Daunte Wright last year also concluded just over a month ago. Potter, who shot Wright during a traffic stop in Brooklyn Center, a suburb of Minnesota, was also found guilty.

Locke’s death marks the first police killing in Minnesota in 2022, and the third in a span of four months. It is only the latest in an unending wave of killings and violence by police officers in the United States directed towards the working class. Police kill an average of three people every day with approximately 1,000 victims every year, in most cases the police justification is accepted by the media and prosecutors as good coin and officers avoid any criminal charges.



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