

Body camera footage confirms

Akron police executed unarmed, fleeing Jayland Walker in a hail of gunfire

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Body camera footage released by the Akron, Ohio, police department Sunday afternoon shows multiple cops unloading a barrage of gunfire into 25-year-old Jayland Walker, killing him in the early hours of Monday, June 27, following a brief vehicle and foot pursuit.

From the footage it is clear that Walker was unarmed and never posed a threat to the police, yet they continued to pump rounds into his body well after he had collapsed onto the pavement after the initial police volley. The video shows dozens of rounds entering Walker's supine and motionless body.

The volume of gunfire, which lasts roughly seven seconds, is so deafening that it is impossible to tell from the audio how many rounds the police shot at Walker, although the footage shows police reloading during the fusillade.

The video selectively released by police on Sunday omits footage of the cops handcuffing Walker's mutilated body after they had hunted him down and slaughtered him. Nor does it show the circumstances surrounding the traffic stop, which, according to the police, led to the young man's death.

The horrific murder took place in the city of Akron, home to over 200,000 people. For much of the 20th century, the city was the center of rubber production in the United States. In 1936, nearly a year before it was successfully implemented by autoworkers in Flint, Michigan, Akron factory workers pioneered the tactic of the sit-down strike, which prevented company scabs from operating machinery at struck factories.

However, decades of deindustrialization have devastated the city, leading to widespread social misery. While Akron residents struggle to survive, its police department continues to receive generous funding. In the 2020 budget, the Akron police received nearly \$60 million out of a budget of \$173

million, well over a third.

At a Sunday press conference, Akron Police Chief Steve Mylett confirmed that Walker was unarmed when he suffered more than "60 wounds" at the hands of eight officers. A total of 13 cops were involved in the incident.

Mylett—almost a week after the fact—was unable to confirm precisely how many rounds police fired at Walker. He did acknowledge, however, that media reports of upwards of 90 rounds being discharged by the police were likely accurate.

On Friday, Akron's Democratic Mayor Dan Horrigan, fearing a social eruption, canceled a previously scheduled Fourth of July festival. Police have set up barricades around the Akron Police Department building and blocked off adjacent streets.

The family of Walker and Akron residents have been protesting the killing of young Jayland since Thursday. On Sunday, hundreds marched and protested outside the police station, chanting "Justice for Jayland" and demanding the immediate firing of the eight officers directly involved in the killing.

Despite the peaceful character of the protest, as it continued into the evening, heavily armed riot police were deployed. Social media video shows police firing tear gas at protesters sometime around 11:00 p.m. As of this writing, it is unclear if any protesters were injured or arrested.

A march was also held in New York City in support of Walker. Many protesters at both demonstrations carried signs demanding that the officers, who have yet to be named and have been put on paid leave, be charged with murder.

The timing of the release of the grisly footage—Sunday afternoon before the July 4 holiday—is a clear attempt to tamp down popular anger over the killing of yet another unarmed young worker.

At Sunday's press conference, Mayor Horrigan solidarized himself with the police. He, like Chief Mylett,

repeatedly called for “patience” and “peace” to allow the so-called “independent” investigation headed by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) to proceed.

After completing its investigation, the BCI will make recommendations on any possible prosecutions to Attorney General Dave Yost, a Republican. Yost is an ardent defender of the police and their “right” to kill with impunity, as demonstrated by his response to the first police killing of 2022, the murder of father and husband James Williams on January 1 in Canton, Ohio.

Williams was murdered by Canton police Officer Robert Huber. He was shot multiple times by Huber as he was ringing in the New Year with celebratory gunfire in his fenced-in backyard, a legal activity in Canton. In a public interview five days after Williams was murdered, Yost backed the police, calling Williams’ behavior “stupid” and “dangerous,” and told the public not to believe footage previously released by the state showing cops shooting Williams through a fence without identifying themselves.

More than six months after the BCI investigation of Williams’ death, the BCI has yet to publicly release the results of its probe. Yost has not filed any charges against Huber.

There is no reason to believe that the “investigation” into Walker’s murder will be any different.

At the Sunday press conference, Akron Police Chief Mylett claimed that Walker fired a gun from his car about a minute into the pursuit, an allegation that is disputed by Walker’s family. While a gun was recovered in Walker’s vehicle, it is not clear if he ever fired it.

Nevertheless, Mylett told the press that the alleged gun shot from Walker’s car changed the “dynamic” of the interaction from a traffic stop to a “public safety” issue.

This is an attempt to establish a narrative to justify the murder of Walker on the grounds that his police killers feared for their lives.

Mylett did not comment on the “public safety” risk posed by eight officers firing over 90 rounds in a public parking lot in the span of roughly seven seconds.

In his statement before showing the video, Mylett attacked unnamed elements in the “the media” for presenting “misinformation” that caused “irreparable harm.” He claimed that the police “diligently provided first aid” to the dying Walker.

In a brief question-and-answer session, he side-stepped a question about police handcuffing Walker after killing him, instead reiterating that police provided “life-saving aid” to

the victim.

The police chief claimed that the police involved in the shooting had relayed to their union president that they were “going to cooperate” with the BCI. At the same time he said that *none* of the eight cops who shot and killed Walker had presented him or the BCI, nearly a week after the event, with a written statement on what happened.

The police are a critical component of the capitalist state, which is not a neutral body but rather an apparatus to defend the class interests—economic and political—of the corporate ruling elite. The police are the armed, front-line enforcers of the interests of the billionaires who own the means of production and ruthlessly exploit the workers, who actually produce all of society’s wealth.

Under conditions of pandemic, war, inflation and political crisis, the ruling class and both of its political parties, the Democrats no less than the Republicans, militarize the police and rely on them all the more to suppress the growing opposition of the working class.

According to a tracker maintained by the *Washington Post*, Walker’s death brings to at least 528 the number of people killed by police this year in the US. In the last 12 months, the same tracker has documented over 1,000 police killings, or about three a day.

Police departments set out to recruit the most backward and right-wing elements, including racists and fascists, to perform their function for the ruling class.

This is why, despite killing over 1,000 people every year, less than 1 percent of police are convicted.

President Joe Biden and the Democrats have dropped any pretense of police “reform” and instead seek to outdo the Republicans in their praise of the police. The “Bipartisan Safer Communities Act” signed into law by Biden last month following the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas does nothing to restrict ownership of assault rifles, while adding hundreds of millions in new funding for local, state and federal police.



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