

Body camera footage of murder of 4-year-old Terrell Miller reveals callous brutality of police

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On Monday, police in the western Illinois city of Macomb released edited body camera footage depicting the March 16 police murder of Anthony George and four-year-old Terrell Miller, whom George was attempting to use as a human shield. The footage shows quite clearly the callous brutality of the police, their complete indifference to human life, as they operate in a manner identical to that of an occupying military force.

The video of the event shows the whole incident to have taken place in around 16 seconds from the point when the police officers entered the apartment of Keianna Miller, Terrell's mother, after officers responded to multiple 911 calls reporting domestic violence at the residence.

Having heard a woman screaming, "He's stabbing me," the police officers forced their way into the apartment, encountering Miller. Miller was ordered out of the apartment and warned officers that her son was in another room.

The police officers then turned toward that room and encountered Anthony George, Miller's boyfriend, whom Miller reported was intoxicated. George ducked behind a wall and came out holding Terrell along with two knives which he was pressing against the boy's body. An officer fired one shot, the immediate aftermath of which is not depicted, which hit Terrell in the head, continuing on into George's throat, killing them both. This sequence itself occurs in just about five seconds.

Keianna Miller's attorney, Marleen Suarez, noted at a news conference on Monday, "there was no de-escalation, no negotiations. I find it hard to believe that in the heat of that moment, he did not stop and think. I

don't know what made him think he could make that shot."

Miller herself said, "They could've done anything besides use their weapon, they had tasers, they had pepper spray, they had all these non-lethal ways to get Anthony George, and they decided not to do it."

According to several reports, the identity of the police officer who fired the fatal shot is Lt. Nick Goc. The other officer involved in the murder was Korri Cameron. Both officers have been on paid administrative leave since the shooting.

Goc has been a police officer with the Macomb Police Department since 2007. In 2019, he won the department's Officer of the Year Award, and he has worked as a field training officer for the department since 2008. Goc is a member of the Macomb/McDonough County Strategic Response Team, a tactical unit no doubt well versed in employing extreme violence during its operations.

Despite the callous indifference to human life displayed by Goc, prosecutors in western Illinois made the decision that the police officers would not be charged. Jonathan H. Barnard of the Illinois State's Attorneys Appellate Prosecutor, which was asked by the local state's attorney Matt Kwacala to weigh in on the decision, wrote in a letter to Kwacala on July 8, "I find that there is no basis for any criminal action or prosecution that is supportable under the facts of this case against any of the officers involved in this tragic incident."

Even though prosecutors declined to file charges against Goc or his partner, Macomb's police chief, Jeff Hamer, is reportedly still conducting his own internal investigation of the incident, no doubt in a continuing

attempt to defuse widespread anger over the shocking actions of the police.

Indeed, police and prosecutors in Macomb have worked systematically to slow-walk the investigation and prevent the full details from being released all at once in order to ultimately provide the officers with impunity. Investigation of the incident was first shunted to the Illinois State Police (ISP), while the decision about criminal charges was given to Barnard, a former prosecutor in a nearby county. Even though the decision not to charge the police officers was communicated to the local state's attorney on July 8, this was not revealed until July 23.

Suarez, Miller's attorney, stated at the news conference that she intends to file a civil lawsuit over the killing of Terrell. As she noted, "It's hard to find justice sometimes in a civil courtroom, but it may be the only alternative open to us at this point." According to Suarez, Terrell's family believes "the police officer acted recklessly."

Miller herself made clear that the actions of the police were not ultimately an issue of racism. She stated "A lot of people want to make it a racial thing but it's really not. He [Terrell Miller] could've been anybody's son, but he's America's nephew, that's what I'm starting to say."

According to the *Washington Post* police shootings database, Miller is the youngest child in Illinois to be killed by police since the newspaper started compiling data in 2015. The website Mapping Police Violence notes that 772 people have been killed by police as of July 20, with 13 in Illinois alone.

Although Miller said she hopes officers will receive regular de-escalation training, police violence is not a matter of training or reform. The terror and violence meted out by the police is a consequence of the extreme levels of social inequality in the United States.

As the WSWS pointed out in relation to the police execution of Sonya Massey last month in Springfield, Illinois:

The question of police violence and how to end it is a class question. While the Democrats and Republicans promote the myth that the police exist to "protect and serve" the entire population, with a few wrinkles that can be

ironed out with more training and funding, in reality, they are armed forces created to enforce inequality and protect the property interests of the ruling class. The police operate as roving gangs and death squads on behalf of the capitalist state whose target is the internal enemy: the working class.

Notably, there have been no public comments on the release of the video by local politicians, including Mayor Michael J. Inman, a retired Illinois State Police officer. Illinois' billionaire Democratic Governor J.B. Pritzker has remained silent on the police murder of Terrell Miller. Pritzker is reportedly being vetted as a potential pick for vice president on a ticket with former prosecutor Kamala Harris.



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