

One person killed in attack on anti-police violence protest in Louisville, Kentucky

By Warren Duzak
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An ongoing protest against police violence in Louisville, Kentucky was attacked Saturday night by what police say was a lone gunman, who fired more than a dozen rounds at demonstrators, killing one young man.

Tyler Gerth, 27, of Louisville was killed in the shooting that took place at about 9:00 p.m. Saturday night at Jefferson Square Park in the downtown area. A second person was reportedly wounded in the shooting but not severely.

Police found the man they believe to be the shooter but have yet to identify him. The *Louisville Courier Journal*, however, reported Sunday afternoon that the shooter is 23-year-old Steven Lopez. Police said they had been previously aware of the alleged shooter, noting that he had been asked several times to leave the demonstration by protesters because of “disruptive behavior.”

Lopez had been arrested on June 17 and charged that morning with inciting a riot, disorderly conduct, harassment and possession of drug paraphernalia. His citation noted he was in possession of a handgun “with two full mags of ammo” at the time of the arrest, the *Course Journal* reported.

The question then is if Lopez had been charged with such crimes, why did the police release him? Neither police nor city officials have so far offered an answer.

Police Chief Robert Schroeder admitted that the alleged shooter had been arrested “a couple of times” in the past several weeks. Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer said the suspect had been wounded and is hospitalized but did not go into details.

The demonstration Saturday night was likely more than a bit on edge after armed right-wing militia groups posted on social media plans to come that night for a counterdemonstration. Despite the posts, no

counterdemonstrators appeared.

A graduate of the University of Kentucky and an aspiring photographer, Tyler Gerth had been active in the demonstrations.

“It was this sense of justice that drove Tyler to be part of the peaceful demonstrations advocating for the destruction of the systemic racism within our society’s systems,” Gerth’s family said in statement. “This, combined with his passion for photography, led to a strong need within him to be there, documenting the movement, capturing and communicating the messages of peace and justice.”

A vigil was held for Gerth Sunday night on the public square where he was killed.

Louisville has become a center of the demonstrations against police violence after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last month. Floyd’s killing fueled ongoing protests over the March 13 killing of 26-year-old African American emergency medical technician Breonna Taylor by three Louisville police officers.

Protesters have been at Jefferson Square Park since May 28 demanding that criminal charges be brought against Taylor’s killers. Protesters had established a camp site at the park, but police took Saturday’s shooting as an opportunity to roughly seize and carry off camping equipment. Camping has now been forbidden.

“The community that was built there is not ending because they decided to throw us out,” Shameka Parrish-Wright said at a Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression press conference on Sunday morning. “We will be back. We’re going to come back stronger, and we’re not going to give up.”

Taylor was shot to death by Louisville police, who conducted a no-knock warrant at her apartment. She

was in bed with her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, when the police burst in without identifying themselves, as is allowed with “no-knock” warrants.

Walker, who suspected the police were intruders, had his own gun and fired once hitting one officer in the leg. Taylor was struck eight times in a hail of 10 shots fired by plainclothes Detective Brett Hankison.

Hankison, who was fired earlier this month for “wantonly and blindly” firing 10 shots in the apartment, has not been charged with any crime.

The Louisville police also have yet to answer for a shooting during protests on June 1 in which a National Guard soldier shot and killed David McAtee, a popular Louisville, Kentucky restaurant owner known as the “BBQ Man.”

Former Police Chief Steve Conrad was fired this month in the aftermath of the shooting of McAtee, since the police officers who had accompanied the National Guard soldier had not activated their body cameras in the encounter.

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