

Wisconsin deploys national guard amid protests over police shooting

Video on social media appears to show officers in Kenosha shoot at Jacob Blake seven times as he leaned into vehicle

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The shooting in Kenosha, Wisconsin led to protests outside the local police station. Photograph: Mark Hertzberg/ZUMA Wire/REX/Shutterstock

The Wisconsin national guard was deployed to Kenosha on Monday in advance of more protests expected after a man appeared to have been shot several times in the back by the city's police on Sunday.

The police officer in question is being investigated by the Wisconsin justice department amid uproar over the incident, which prompted protests the same night and drew criticism from Joe Biden, the Democratic presidential nominee, on Monday.

County officials said on Monday afternoon that state national guard members would arrive in Kenosha, about 40 miles south of Milwaukee, at 8pm local time to coincide with a planned curfew.

A video that emerged on Sunday, taken by a bystander, shows the man, identified by the Wisconsin governor, Tony Evers, as Jacob Blake, walking around a car on a Kenosha street as several officers stand by.

Blake, who is in serious condition in hospital, is seen attempting to get into the car through the driver's side door. As he does so, an officer fires. At least seven gunshots are heard.

The civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump said Blake's three young sons had been in the car.

Crump, who has represented the families of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, African Americans killed this year by the police or public in incidents that sparked nationwide protests over systemic racism in America, said Blake's family had contacted him for assistance.

"They saw a cop shoot their father," Crump said on Twitter. "They will be traumatized forever. We cannot let officers violate their duty to PROTECT us. Our kids deserve better!!"

The shooting prompted hundreds to protest in Kenosha. Police used teargas and several vehicles were reportedly set on fire on Sunday night. More protests were planned for Monday afternoon and evening.

"Tonight, Jacob Blake was shot in the back multiple times, in broad daylight, in Kenosha, Wisconsin," said Governor Evers, a Democrat.

"While we do not have all of the details yet, what we know for certain is that he is not the first Black man or person to have been shot or injured or mercilessly killed at the hands of individuals in law enforcement in our state or our country."

A journalist for the WISN12 news channel reported that Blake was 29-years-old.

In a statement, the Wisconsin attorney general's office said the department of justice was investigating "an officer involved in the shooting".

"The involved officers have been placed on administrative leave," the statement said.

On Monday, Biden released a statement in which he expressed "grief and outrage that yet another Black American is a victim of excessive force".

"These shots pierced the soul of the nation," Biden added, calling for the dismantling of "systemic racism", for "an immediate, full and transparent investigation" and for the officers involved to be held accountable.

The shooting and protests have renewed calls for police reform. Evers on Monday demanded that the state legislature convene in a special session to consider a set of police reform bills proposed more than two months ago. The nine bills would prohibit chokeholds and curtail other use-of-force tactics.

The legislation package was introduced in the wake of George Floyd's killing by police in Minneapolis in May – but Republican leaders in Wisconsin's state legislature have yet to meet on the proposals, the Kenosha News reported.

“We cannot wait for Republican leadership to show up for work because clearly they intend to keep us waiting,” Evers said. “That’s not going to cut it.”

Evers used an executive order to schedule a special session on 31 August, to consider the legislation.

On Monday, state attorney general, Josh Kaul, said at a press conference that: “We are going to vigorously and fully investigate the facts of this case.”

“Our pursuit of justice is going to be unwavering,” he said.

Kaul pointed out that the Wisconsin department of justice won’t decide whether there will be a criminal case in this incident; rather, the local prosecutor will make that decision.

It was also revealed at the press conference that federal prosecutors reached out to local officials, offering assistance. A city official said he believes there will be a “parallel” federal civil rights investigation into the incident.

Video appears to show black man shot in back by police in Wisconsin

On Sunday, protesters chanted “no justice, no peace” and some appeared to throw objects at officers and damage police vehicles.

In a scene familiar from months of protests over police brutality and racial injustice around the world following the deaths of Taylor, Floyd and other Black people killed by police, demonstrators headed to the Kenosha county public safety building, which police in riot gear had mostly blocked off. Some officers were positioned on the roof of the station.

Outside, protesters faced off with officers who held plastic shields and batons they occasionally used to push people back. Teargas was used to disperse groups of people, according to reporters at the scene.

Kenosha police said officers responded to a reported domestic incident at 5.11pm in the city before the shooting occurred.

“Law enforcement immediately provided medical aid to the person who was shot,” the state justice department said in a statement. “Flight for Life transported the person to Froedtert hospital in Milwaukee. The person is in serious condition.”